american craft

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Plus
A Crafter Looks at Her Heritage, A Sojourn in Portsmouth, NH, and Reviews of Viola Frey and Charles Rohlfs

Ron Nagle's Year: New Forms, New Book, New Solo Album



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american craft

Vol. 69, No. 6
December 2009/January 2010

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American Craft Council
www.craftcouncil.org



Above:
Mark Newport's
Every-Any-No Man,
2005, acrylic yarn
and buttons,
120 x 26 x 6 in.
page 038

On the cover:
A still life of
ceramic works in
Ron Nagle's studio,
photographed by
Elena Dorfman.
page 040

Newport photo Gene Young.

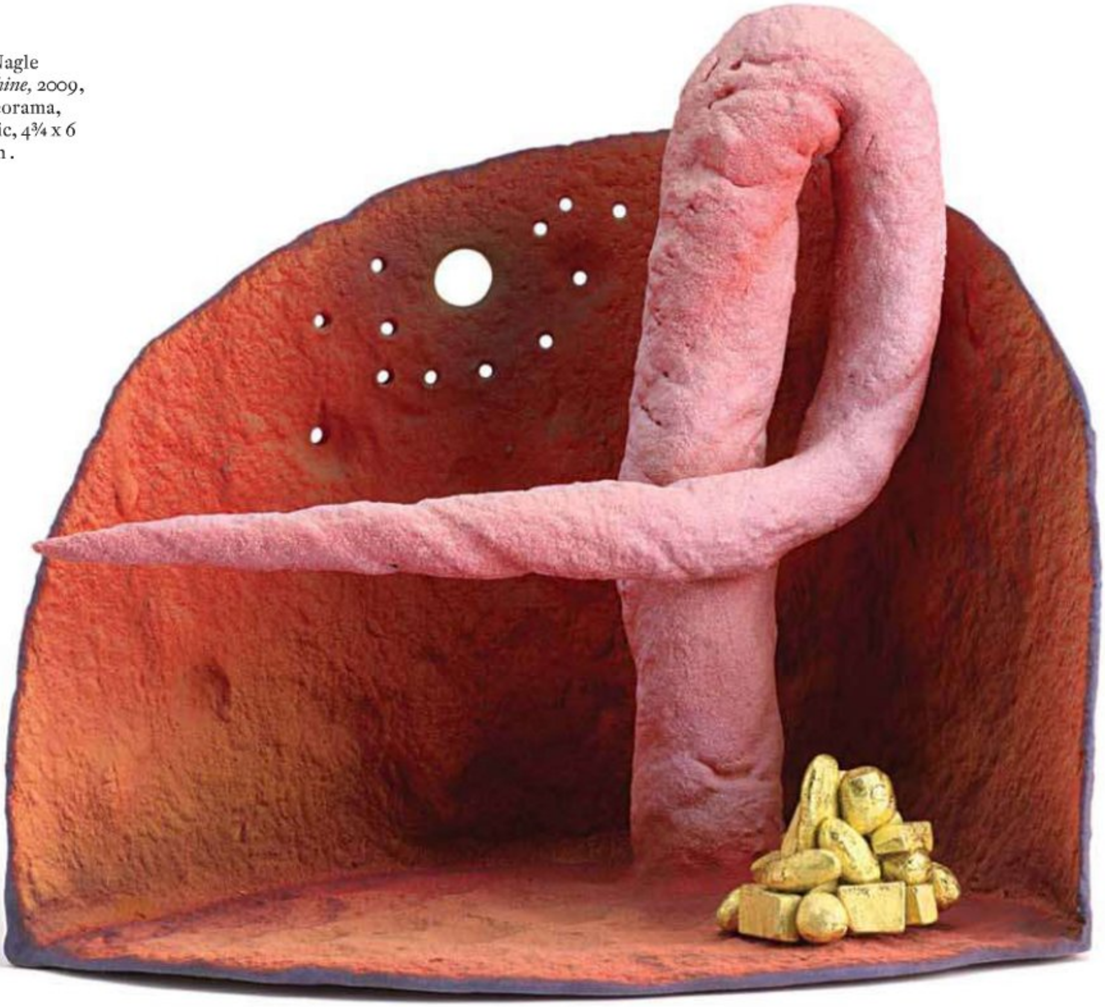
Departments

Online
Editor's Letter
"Communication—Fraught or Not," the current letter, is appearing on our website, americancraftmag.org, to allow more space for Letters in this issue.

Features

americancraftmag.org
More photos, more reviews, more listings, more interviews and more of everything craft-related and beyond.

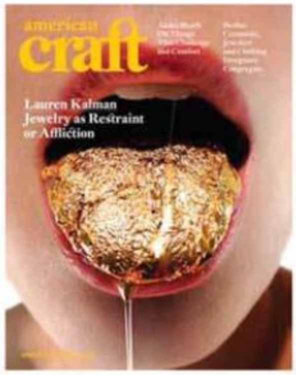
Ron Nagle
Spit Shine, 2009, a Weeorama, ceramic, 4¾ x 6 x 3¾ in.



"I'm really much more interested in painting than I am in sculpture. My work is about surface, proportion of color."
—Ron Nagle

Photo Don Tuttle.

Kicks & Kudos



The cover of the October/November 2009 American Craft.



The cover of the August/September 2009 American Craft.

A Lot to Like

Congratulations on your August/September issue. It not only contains a lot to like, but edited out the most off-putting advertisements and questionable editorials.

In the 50 years I've known the magazine, the number of makers has exploded perhaps 100 times, so editing is important. So is focusing on what is worthy. I appreciate your focusing on now related to then—it's time that we do so. And particularly look at craft 50 years ago, when we thought we were part of design and architecture, and happy making work that was useful, all within five or six narrowly restricted arenas such as handloom weaving, stoneware, enamels, turned wood and silver jewelry.

Onward! And thank you.

JACK LENOR LARSEN
New York, NY

Editors' Note: Thanks for your kind comments, but we didn't edit out the ads. The recession did.

You've Lost Your Way

Your mission statement, as printed in American Craft, is "to promote understanding and appreciation of contemporary American craft." After receiving August/September, with a cover story featuring British artists from a century ago, I see a complete disconnect between the concept of "contemporary American craft" and the focus of your magazine. Recognizing and acknowledging the contributions of earlier artists and art movements obviously does contribute to the understanding and appreciation of today's art, but it is a subject that is better left to Art History 101 lecturers.

I tolerated your relaunch/redesign of the magazine with its pretentious, difficult-to-read font. I put up with your scattered gallery exhibition listings, and I struggled with the lack of captions under inset photos. I don't want a rehash of history "from the stacks," I want to see where we are going in the future, who is new and innovative, who is pushing the limits of their medium.

I want a magazine that puts its focus and its efforts on contemporary American art. Get a grip on your mission statement or you'll be losing my membership.

SUSAN MADDEN
Austin, TX

Bravo Brandt and Boston

In your August/September issue, you carried a wonderful article about the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston. I was particularly pleased to read the story of the Society's early days. It happens that Beverly K. Brandt did some of her research at 175 Newbury Street when I was president and director of the Society. I am optimistic that the Society, having survived wars and recessions, will continue its work. Our current director, Beth Ann Gerstein, is doing a superb job in keeping the work going. For the sake of artists and the public, I hope that leadership in education will continue.

HERTA LOESER
Canton, MA

A Lot More History

Michael Fallon's August/September article, "The Twin Cities–A Mecca for Craft," implies that "craft activity" blossomed in the early 1980s. I would maintain that it began at least three decades earlier!

In 1962, I began to sell pots through the Walker Art Center's Book Corner, where Warren and Alix MacKenzie, established potters, and Christian Schmidt, a nationally known local jeweler, were already represented. The Walker placed a strong emphasis on design and craft in the 1950s and into the 1960s; a MacKenzie show was held in 1954. An entire late 1950s issue of the Walker's *Design Quarterly* was devoted to contemporary American ceramics.

The Minnesota Craftsmen's Council (MCC) was formed in April 1965 (I was the first president) and its first exhibition was held Nov. 17–Dec. 23, 1965, with 36 members participating. Almost all were craftspeople with years of experience. I could be wrong, but I believe the Minnesota Craft Council was a politically correct renaming of the Minnesota Craftsmen's Council. It may have been resurrected or restructured, but it seems incorrect to say that it was "founded in 1974." (I was not involved with the MCC then.)

PETER LEACH
Saint Paul, MN

Michael Fallon replies:
While I'd have loved to give a comprehensive history of all postwar craft activities in the Twin Cities, there just wasn't room for that, nor time, nor did I think that was the intent of the assignment. As I began researching the piece, I saw that a lot would have to be left out. Furthermore, after I had spoken with nearly two dozen people—including Peter, Warren and the last director of the MCC—I realized they all had diverging memories of what had happened.

I focused on the vibrant craft institutions/organizations that today serve a host of practitioners. And I stuck to the official record. In Guidestar *I found, as I wrote, that the Minnesota Craft Council was officially established as a legal entity in 1974. I assumed that readers would realize that there was craft activity in Minnesota prior to 1974. Still, I regret that someone feels so aggrieved that he must write in to "correct the record."*

Kalman Critiques

I am a potter and jeweler. I find your October/November article on Lauren Kalman disgusting and a bad example for the future health and talents of young craftspeople. I would like to see a retraction and apology to the real artists and your readers. It was the worst of taste. You should consult a doctor about this. It is not art.

MARLENE COLE
Fort Worth, TX

When Picasso was asked "what is art?" his answer was "what isn't?" On the other hand, Duchamp, who was a genius, used the urinal as a gimmick for his own promotion. Lauren Kalman's so-called art pieces like *Syphilis* are nothing more than tasteless attempts to attract attention. It's a disgrace to consider it art and to promote it in your beautiful magazine.
DR. ROBERT O. FISCH
Minneapolis, MN

As a former goldsmith I appreciate the skill and creativity that went into Kalman's work. My negative reaction is to the cover photo of an open mouth with a string of saliva. Our culture expresses too much "cutting edge," and you may feel pressured to be part of it. Every day we are bombarded by attempts to get our attention. Brighter lights, louder sounds, the bizarre–are we such zombies that we need exceptional stimulation to notice things? Choosing the gold tongue as your cover is less about the art and more about getting people's attention. I urge you to not take the magazine in that direction.
MICHAEL LARSON
Grass Valley, CA

I just received the October/November issue, and love the adventurous cover story–American Craft taking risks!! Inspired, I'm going to get out my old retainer and do something weird and woody with it. I've also been trying to do what Kalman does to my own body, using wood chips and dowels, but I wound up with terrible rashes, cuts and punctures and was asked to leave the swimming pool area at the health club.

Seriously, I think there is a lot of new, experimental work out there, much of it crossing discipline lines, playing with unexpected and/or multiple formats and alternative materials, and it is refreshing to see some ink about it in AC. I am building an Artisanry Integrated Media curriculum in our Artisanry MFA program because I have had so many grad students doing work that is not media specific and, conceptually, moves away from traditional focuses and toward environmental and social concerns.
STEVE WHITTLESEY
UMASS Dartmouth
New Bedford, MA

Don't Get Too Comfortable

Re "In Defense of the Comfort Zone" (October/November): I think it is pretty well accepted that comfort has its place in the household, but only as far as we expect to find our bed where we left it that morning. But complacency–comfort's kin–has no place in craft. So please, don't get too comfortable.
AUSTIN REAVIS
Student, Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis, IN

Clarification

Reader Helga Perry of Rugby, U.K., writes that Erik Scollon's review, "Against the Grain," in the April/May 2009 issue, repeats a curatorial labeling error in an exhibition at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Louise Nippierd works with fake fur, not real animal fur, which affects the interpretation of the work.

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american craft

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zoom

An up close guide to books, galleries, people & places



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Higashi photo Jaymie Scott / *Towered Earrings* photo Ron Bosko / *Antler Necklace* photo Denise Silva.



4



5

Shop Talk

Subtle Beauty

Shibumi Gallery
1402 Fifth St.
Berkeley, CA 94710
510-528-7736
shibumigallery.com

"I like making things look good," says the jeweler/gallerist April Higashi ❸, be it the right accessory on a client or the warm, serene, "earthy-modern" environment of Shibumi, which offers contemporary art, jewelry and clothing by established and emerging makers, including Biba Schutz, Eric Silva and Karen Gilbert, who made *Towered Earrings* ❶, *Antler Necklace* ❷ and *Seed* ❺, respectively.

How did you become an artist?
My grandfather was an artist. He was Japanese American, and more kinesthetic about the way he interacted with me when I was young. Instead of talking, he took me drawing. I was always naturally drawn to visual things, touching; that's how I learned. He was a big influence. My mom cultivated that and put me around a lot of art.

I was raised in Salt Lake City, which is kind of an unlikely place for someone who's not white and not Mormon. I just always was used to being different and enjoyed seeking out individuality because I was already in that place anyway. I knew I wanted to live someplace more multicultural, so I came to San Francisco for school, and got a degree in textiles and fine art [at the Academy of Art University]. I was interested in fashion, but really liked the process of making.

Why did you open a gallery?
I've always loved presenting things. My jewelry only felt complete when it was displayed properly. An environment affects me because I'm aesthetically drawn, but I think it's really important even for people who aren't aware of aesthetics. It affects them on a subliminal level and they feel more at ease. With jewelry, context is so important—who's buying the work and how it looks on them, as much as the way it's presented. I like things to have a place.

My husband, Eric Powell, is a metal sculptor, and he made all of our cases. One, for rings, has counterweights in it and a door that slides up; it's a beautiful experience for people. I carry nontraditional commitment and wedding rings, such as Todd Reed's *Rose Cut Diamond Eternity Bands* ❹, and that's been a good base for my clientele, because you build such a relationship with people. It's very intimate. They enjoy coming back, and they'll buy gifts and move into other areas of the gallery.

You offer different services—events, visual consultation.
I do four to five shows a year, plus trunk shows to introduce clients to an artist's work. I also do consulting. One of my clients who is a big art jewelry collector hired me to hang all of her artwork. We also built her a beautiful display where people could see her jewelry. She found a really interesting table and we put felt in it and cut slits where all the jewelry could go, and arranged all the drawers.

What's the meaning of *shibumi*?
A subtle and deeply moving beauty cherished by artists and connoisseurs.—J.L.

Hot Spots

Best Views

Gallery shows, listed A–Z by state. View complete calendar: americancraftmag.org

AR / Little Rock
Arkansas Arts Center
52nd Annual Delta Exhibition
Jan. 29–Mar. 14
arkarts.com
Encompassing contemporary works in all media, this competitive exhibition reflects the Mississippi Delta region's strong tradition of craftsmanship.

CA / Los Angeles
Fowler Museum at UCLA
Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art
to Jan. 10
fowler.ucla.edu
A celebration of basketry by Africans in America from the 17th century to the present.

CA / Oceanside
Oceanside Museum of Art
An American Dream: Gregg Jabs
to Jan. 10
oma-online.org
In a body of figural sculpture Jabs probes the American Dream with wry humor.



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Preview
Urban Epic

Museum of Art
Rhode Island School of Design
Arnie Zimmerman: Inner City
Providence, RI
Sept. 25, 2009 – Jan. 3, 2010
risdmuseum.org

Inner City, ❶ and ❷, combines two important aspects of Arnie Zimmerman's ceramic oeuvre: his architectural interests, represented by the large carved vessels he produced in the 1980s, and the intimate groupings of figures he focused on beginning in the 1990s. This complex installation, whose gridlike framework was designed by the Portuguese architect Tiago Montepegado, spreads across a 4,000-square-foot space of the RISD Museum's Chace Center galleries, comprising more than 150 figures and architectural elements. There are pedestals of varying heights, components attached to walls and viewing ramps. This isn't the men's first collaboration: Montepegado's base for a group of figures shown in Lisbon in 2004 gave Zimmerman the idea for *Inner City*. It "made me realize that I wanted to push the narrative with the small figures into a context that confronts the viewer the way architecture does." They constructed versions of *Inner City* that were displayed in Lisbon in 2007 and in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, in 2008. Zimmerman says, "Tiago serves as master city planner to my role as the creator of little people, buildings and other objects."

Out of stoneware clay, glaze and epoxy, Zimmerman has devised a miniaturized urban panorama, resembling the densely populated scenes in the paintings of Brueghel or Bosch, but also evocative of the style of some WPA artists of the New Deal. The diminutive stoneware tenements, skyscrapers, scaffolding and trestles are teeming with figures (more like figurines) of workers, who dumpster dive, build, rest, eat and brawl. There's an antic side to these tableaux—some figures have pots or saucepans on their heads—but the vision is ambiguous. There's vitality, but is it bringing progress or repetitive toil?

Zimmerman has noted that in the RISD *Inner City*, he worked more on architectural forms and less on the figure, an attempt at "architectural diversity," reflecting the New York City he has lived in for over 25 years. He is commenting on the relentless pace of tearing down and building that can obliterate neighborhoods even as it brings forth new streetscapes. "The parts of the city I was most familiar with when I first arrived had a visceral, palpable connection to the past," Zimmerman says. "Over the past few decades, New York City has irrevocably changed into a different urban environment—something more civil and benign, more bland and corporate."—B.S.



❷



❶

CT / Guilford
Guilford Art Center
Artistry 2009
to Jan. 3
guilfordartcenter.org
Over 350 makers in every medium display their wares in this must-see show and sale.

IL / Chicago
The Art Institute of Chicago
Apostles of Beauty: Arts and Crafts from Britain to Chicago
to Jan. 31
artic.edu
This interdisciplinary exhibition highlights a wide range of objects from Chicago collections, exploring, through a thematic history, the complex influences of the Arts and Crafts movement.

ME / Rockport
❶ Center for Furniture Craftsmanship
Maine Wood: 2010 Biennial Exhibition
Dec. 4–Feb. 12
woodschool.org
The breadth of woodworking in the Pine Tree State, illustrated by Matthew Lindsay's *Strummers Stool*, are celebrated in this juried presentation.

MA / Brookline
Brookline Arts Center
35th Annual Crafts Showcase
Dec. 2–20
brooklineartscenter.com
An eclectic display by 100 gifted artists reveals the versatility and appeal of the handmade.



Illustration Tamara Shopsin.

Voices

What aspect of your work do you find the most difficult?

The most difficult part is coming up with new designs. I'm always contemplating how a shape will come out and striving for something different. Traditional forms were passed down to me from my ancestors, and I wanted to introduce my own designs that no one had ever done before. So this has always been a challenge for me.
—Mary Jackson, *sweetgrass basket weaver, Charleston, SC*

I'm working on a project that requires reading interviews and oral histories. In the past, I have conducted many interviews and a number of oral histories with artists, and reading others at this task reminds me how difficult it is to phrase a question or guide the artist to information essential for a clear understanding of a situation.

Keeping the person focused on the subject at hand can also be a problem. Some rambling by the artist could yield good information, but usually it does not.

I also realize that a person's memory may not always be accurate, and that facts need to be checked with other sources.

I always enjoy doing interviews, but I know from past experience that I need to prepare very carefully in order to have worthwhile information for my writing.
—Elaine Levin, *art historian, writer, curator, lecturer and juror, Northridge, CA*

As a newspaper art critic, I write all kinds of articles on the visual arts, including news articles, analysis, commentary and profiles. But the hardest part of my job is the thing I've been doing the longest–exhibition reviews.

An artist may spend up to two years working on a show, but a critic often has little more than a week to write a review comprehending everything about the work–its appearance, execution, sources, influences and ideas. Getting a handle on all of this is prerequisite to achieving meaningful critical insights that will spur the reader to engage with the work. It's a process of total immersion, intense, arduous at times, but always rewarding.
—Alice Thorson, *art critic,* Kansas City Star

What I struggle with the most is trying to see exactly what it is that I want from a piece. What I mean is that when I begin a series of work, I have no preconceived idea what form and appearance a cup, a bowl, a plate or a vase is going to take; my only requirements are that there be an element of tension and resonance and that the result surprises me.

It would be rather easy, though unsatisfying, to reproduce a successful piece from my earlier work, but finding this new expression has always been difficult. At times I sense what I'm after, but it is like searching in a fog. I suppose that if I suddenly found it extremely easy to locate this quality in new work, I probably would not trust the answer.
—Rob Barnard, *studio potter, Timberville, VA*

In order for me to be an artist I must also take on the roles of jewelry instructor and jewelry designer. The income and stability from the two allow me to create freely. The most difficult thing for me is to make time, and to be motivated and completely focused during the available time.

I have always been a slow maker and worked intuitively. These work habits are problematic now that I am no longer in school, where making art was my full-time job. Juried exhibitions help me to discipline myself to complete work within a certain time frame. I hope to be better at time management and self-management, but until then I will be imbibing energy drinks while I finish felting just in time to meet my deadline.
—Hisano Takei, *wool jewelry, Irvine, CA*

The most challenging aspect of my job currently is grappling with new and rapidly changing expectations of our visitors about museums. For example, social-media tools promise meaningful connections and interactions with a vast array of people who have an interest in art, but the kinds of instantaneous communication provided by Twitter, Flickr, blogs, RSS feeds, etc. defy standard museum practice and thoughtful scholarship.

In addition to mastering the mechanics of the applications and shaping their visual appearance to mesh with our museum's brand, I find myself struggling with this need to add another layer, related to workload, costs and integration of these new tools and tasks, into my day-to-day work at the museum.
—Rock Hushka, *director of curatorial administration and curator of contemporary and Northwest art, Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA*

The most challenging aspect of my work is curating exhibitions at art fairs. The work has to be dramatic and cohesive and you have so little space in which to show it. This has really been my grad school.
—Lucy Lacoste, *Lacoste Gallery, Concord, MA*





Product Placement

Jonathan Adler

When Jonathan Adler was 12 years old his parents sent him to camp expecting him to return tanned and toned from two months of swimming and sports. "Instead, they found a pasty potter who had spent the summer in the pottery studio completely obsessed," jokes Adler. "I came back changed."

Within a year Adler convinced his parents to buy him a pottery wheel and kiln. "My father was a lawyer, but he spent every spare moment painting and sculpting in his studio in our basement. My parents totally understood my creative drive," Adler says, revealing why his parents were willing to believe that his newfound passion was something more than a whim. "The only hurdle was convincing my mother that I would not get clay dust all over our white wall-to-wall carpet."

Adler's parents might have been exceptionally supportive, but they might never have predicted Adler's incredible success as a potter, designer, merchandiser and judge on the Bravo reality series *Top Design.* Even he never thought it would be a career. He studied semiotics and art history at Brown University, and after college he began working in the movie business.

"I was a horrid employee," Adler says. "I got fired from every job." During this unemployment Adler made pots, and as his employment prospects dwindled he found himself making more and more. "I finally showed them to a buyer at Barneys and got an order, and then got another," he explains. "It just grew organically."

After several years of working feverishly Adler realized he needed help. That's when he discovered Aid to Artisans, the nonprofit organization that connects designers with artisans in developing countries. He established a relationship with a workshop in Peru. "By freeing myself from production I was able to have a creative explosion," Adler says. This also gave him the time to open a store in New York City that carried ceramics, including Luciana Vase ❶, and textiles, a medium that he'd fallen in love with in Peru, such as Zebra British Flag Rug ❷.

Since then Adler, who still considers himself a potter above all else, has expanded to an entire line of interior design merchandise and opened 10 other stores. "Hardy Amies was once asked why he dressed the queen of England in colorful and approachable ensembles rather than high fashion," Adler explains in reference to his style. "Amies replied, 'There is an unkindness to chic, and the queen must never appear unkind.' My mission in life is to achieve the impossible and combine chic design with happy design."—**s.s.**

MA / Salem
Peabody Essex Museum
Trash Menagerie
to May 31
pem.org
With an eye on ecological concerns, artists convert everyday waste into playful, attractive and at times disarmingly realistic animals.

NE / Lincoln
International Quilt Study Center & Museum
Perspectives: Art, Craft, Design and the Studio Quilt
to May 9
quiltstudy.org
Never intended for a bed, 21 art quilts from the IQSC collection expressively communicate a broad spectrum of design concepts.

NJ / Clinton
Hunterdon Art Museum
Knitted, Knotted, Netted
to Jan. 24
hunterdonartmuseum.org
Fresh, technically diverse approaches and widely differing materials result in novel textile art by 12 pioneering artists.

NM / Santa Fe
❷ Patina Gallery
Boris Bally: deSigns
Dec. 4–Jan. 3
patina-gallery.com
With his sculpting skills and zest for fun, Bally transforms the remains of street signs into witty, innovative objects and furniture, such as *Yellow Table.*



Contemporary Craft Galleries



Hibberd McGrath Gallery

101 N. Main Street, PO Box 7638, Breckenridge, Colorado 80424
(970) 453-6391 • www.hibberdmcgrath.com

L'Attitude Gallery

218 Newbury Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116
(617) 927-4400 • www.lattitudegallery.com

Obsidian Gallery

4320 N. Campbell Avenue, #130, Tucson, Arizona 85718
(520) 577-3598 • www.obsidian-gallery.com



Vermont Artisan Designs & Gallery 2

106 Main Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
(802) 257-7044 • www.BuyVermontArt.com

Weyrich Gallery/The Rare Vision Art Galerie

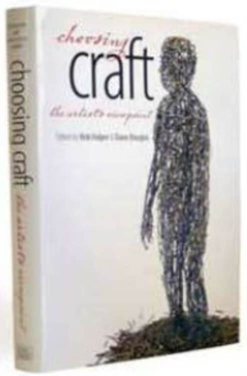
2935-D Louisiana N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110
(505) 883-7410 • www.weyrichgallery.com



White Bird Gallery

Box 502 N. Hemlock Street, Cannon Beach, Oregon 97110
(503) 436-2681 • www.whitebirdgallery.com

photos, top to bottom:
Robin & John Gumaelius at White Bird Gallery
Rob Barnard at Weyrich Gallery
Mary Jane Andreozzi at L'Attitude Gallery



1



2

Books

Makers' Voices

1 Choosing Craft: The Artist's Viewpoint
Edited by Vicki Halper and Diane Douglas
The University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill, NC
$35
uncpress.unc.edu

This anthology, assembled from makers' letters, conference reports, articles in periodicals, lecture notes and oral histories, focuses on artists' experiences and opinions as a primary resource for craft scholarship. Editors Vicki Halper and Diane Douglas, both with museum backgrounds, create a picture of craft as cultural labor, emphasizing lifestyle and economics rather than aesthetics.

The period covered, post-World War II to the present, witnessed the evolution of the studio craft movement in the United States. The material is organized not as a linear history but within dominant themes. The editors identify four seminal activities that ground a professional life in craft; they develop this premise in sections labeled Choosing Craft, Getting an Education, Making a Living and Confronting Craft, each with titled chapters and relevant entries. A biographical narrative introduces each entry, creating a frame for the artist's words. (One could fault the accuracy here and there, like the statement [page 39] that Robert Ebendorf "founded the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) in 1969," when in fact he was one of the nine artists who figured in this initiative.) Each entry ends with a citation of its source. Numerous references were consulted, but the star trove is the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art.

More than 100 makers are quoted, 24 in multiple entries. While the editors justify these repeats, greater breadth might have been achieved by eschewing them in favor of additional voices. For the most part, the makers are leading names in the craft field. Notably, many are peer-elected members of the American Craft Council College of Fellows, begun in 1975.

Among the voices in the first chapter, "Integrating Art and Life," is that of Marguerite Wildenhain, the Bauhaus potter who emigrated from Europe during World War II, settling in California, where she gave workshops over many years at her place, Pond Farm. She admonishes, "The pot is absolutely the image of the man who makes it, and if that man is nothing, to put it bluntly, the pot thrown with all the skill and all the technique in the world will also be nothing" (1959).

In another chapter, "Responding to Materials," furniture maker George Nakashima declares, "Each tree, every part of each tree, has only one perfect use. The long, taut grains of the true cypress, so well adapted to the making of elegant thin grilles, the joyous dance of the figuring in certain species, the richness of graining where two large branches reach out–these can all be released and fulfilled in a worthy object for man's use" (1981).

"Training with Masters" quotes a gracious 1995 letter from glass artist Richard Marquis to Anna Venini. "It's been over 25 years since I worked at Venini & Co. The experience looms large in my development as an artist and as a person. At the time I received the Fulbright grant to Italy I was considered one of the most skilled glassblowers in the fledgling studio glass movement. It was a pitiful state of affairs. I was about as skilled as any ten year old on Murano. I did the best I could and had I known back then that so much attention would be given my work now I would have paid more attention and worked harder."

"Learning in Communities" provides we-were-there stories about the emergence of schools and organizations so key to craft's expansion. Among the 11 entries are a letter by Dale Chihuly and Lewis (Buster) Simpson to participants in the summer 1972 workshop at the fledgling Pilchuck Glass School; excerpts from a paper by Margret Craver on the Handy & Harmon workshops she developed (1947–53) for aspiring metalsmiths; furniture maker Judy Kensley McKie's reminiscences of the New Hamburger Cabinet Works collective to which she belonged in the 1960s; and Gyöngy Laky's description of the Fiberworks Center for the Textile Arts in Berkeley, CA, which she founded in 1973.

Other chapters cover the choices–and tensions–artists have faced in making a living. The voices of Charles Harder (1945), Edith Heath (1957), Jack Lenor Larsen (1971), Ed Rossbach 2 (1982), Nora Naranjo-Morse (1992) and Jun Kaneko (2000)–are but a few of those included on that theme. The final chapters tackle the persistent push/pull of tradition/innovation and examine craft's relationship to the larger world. The last words quoted (from an interview in *Modern Painters*, February 2008) are those of four American artists working in textiles and multimedia sculpture. Ranging in age from 32 to 41, they add currency to this book's valuable and enjoyable conversations on craft.

—LOIS MORAN

Lois Moran was editor in chief of American Craft, 1980–2007.

Rossbach photo (1993) © Tom Grotta, courtesy of browngrotta arts.









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Radar

Marques Marzan

In his office, Marques Marzan, a tall, slender man in an island-design shirt, wears his own carved-ivory pendant with plaited suspension cord around his neck. He says thoughtfully, "I hope to be a bridge between Hawaii's past and present, to honor the cultural traditions of those before us and blend them with the innovations of today." He reflects on his dual career as fiber artist and as a Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner and resource specialist at Honolulu's Bishop Museum, adding that he wants "to show respect for what I know and to share that with dignity."

Born on the island of Oahu and intrigued by the weavings of his great-grandmother, Marzan learned Hawaiian plaiting techniques as a teenager. Earning a BFA in fiber at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and studying under many of Hawaii's master weavers, he adopted Hawaiian fibers and practices as the basis for his work. His freestanding, suspended and relief sculptures, such as

Marzan photo Ann Kapulani Landgraf / Wearables photo Brad Goda / *Space Between* photo Paul Kodama.



❹

Space Between ❸ as well as his wearables ❷, created largely from indigenous plants or those introduced by early Polynesian settlers (although some, such as *Two Knots* ❺, are cotton), typically are abstract in form and have geometric surface pattern.

One of the few accomplished makers of utilitarian forms—large mats, baskets, hats and fans—Marzan collects and processes much of his own fiber. In his plaiting, look for *lauhala,* the long leaves of a tree also known as pandanus. Hibiscus, coconut and *ie ie,* an endemic aerial root, provide the basis for much of his braiding, netting, twining and spinning.

❺



Two Knots photo Hal Lum.

Marzan's work touches on Hawaiian—and often universal—themes that find a background today in the Hawaiian Renaissance, a revival beginning in the 1960s of values, language, dance, song, craft, agriculture and navigation. Through his manipulation of shape, choice of fiber, technique and pattern, and layering of materials, Marzan addresses both folklore and concepts such as origin or sacrifice. In his *Hanau ia,* a bold three-dimensional wall relief of plaited matting, the *piko* (the navel, the point of origin) is a reference in the geometric patterning. The piko can also appear as descending spiral shapes or form the center construction of a lauhala hat. Marzan's wearable art includes a dynamically patterned, layered and gathered bustlelike form woven out of lauhala for a woman and a comparable piece for men reminiscent of traditional feather cloaks.

Marzan is now applying layers of gut, some inscribed with words from traditional chants, over fiber structures that subtly refer to Hawaiian implements. *Anchored* ❹ refers to the *naau* (bowels) and the Hawaiian belief that one's heart and mind reside in the gut.

Equally accomplished in hula, song and protocol, Marzan advises Bishop Museum leadership on how to incorporate Hawaiian traditions into a non-Hawaiian museum setting. In August, he initiated the opening ceremonies of the museum's newly renovated Hawaiian Hall with a traditional chant ❶. He is active as a panelist, speaker and demonstrator at fiber gatherings at home and abroad. Marzan's ethnic background—a quarter Hawaiian, a quarter Japanese and half Filipino—typifies the cultural melting pot of Hawaii, which in 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of statehood.

—JENNIFER SAVILLE

Jennifer Saville is the former curator of Western art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

sites.google.com/site/marquesmarzan
bishopmuseum.org

NY / Corning
❸ Corning Museum of Glass
Favorites from the Contemporary Glass Collection
to Jan. 3
cmog.org
Selections in an astonishing array of forms, colors, scale and methods, such as Donald Lipski's *Water Lilies No. 52,* have captivated visitors over the years by blending the beautiful and the unexpected.

NY / New York
Barry Friedman Ltd
Venice. 3 Visions in Glass
to Jan. 16
barryfriedmanltd.com
This touring exhibition introduces new work by three eminent artists working in Venice—Laura de Santillana, Cristiano Bianchin and Yoichi Ohira.

NC / Charlotte
McColl Center for Visual Art
Joyce Scott: Recall
Jan. 29–Mar. 20
mccollcenter.org
Often startling and provocative, Scott's beadwork, glass sculptures and prints combine humor with social commentary.

NC / Raleigh
Gregg Museum of Art & Design
Faces and Mazes: Lia Cook
to May 15
ncsu.edu/gregg
Jacquard-woven faces dissolve into mazelike patterns, fragmenting into ambiguity.

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❹

People & Places

We've Got News

Awards & Honors

Temple University metals professor **Stanley Lechtzin,** who pioneered the use of electroforming and digital technologies in his jewelry, which includes *PusHere O-Ring Bracelet* ❻, cocreated with Daniella Kerner, received a lifetime achievement award from the Society of North American Goldsmiths at its 2009 conference in Philadelphia… **Leila Tai** ❷, a Beirut-born New Yorker who makes nature-inspired jewelry, such as *Spanish Garden* ❶ and *Mantis* ❹, using the 15th-century plique-à-jour technique, won the American Jewelry Design Council's 2009 New Talent Award… Ceramics writer and curator **Judith Schwartz** was honored by the **Clay Art Center** in Port Chester, NY, at its benefit in September… **Ron Lang** ❸, ceramics chair at the Maryland Institute College of Art, was the honoree at The Clay Ball, a fall fund-raiser for **Baltimore Clayworks**… Ceramist **Cliff Lee,** furniture maker **Matthias Pliessnig,** glass artist **Judith Schaechter** and silversmith **Ubaldo Vitali** have been selected for the next Renwick Craft Invitational, set for spring 2011 at the Smithsonian's **Renwick Gallery** in Washington, DC… It's been an eventful year for husband-and-wife jewelers **David** and **Roberta Williamson.** He assumed the Neal Malicky Chair in the Humanities at Baldwin-Wallace College; she joined the Ohio Designer Craftsmen board. Together they received an award of excellence in the ODC "Best of 2009" traveling show and a $5,000 artist fellowship from the state arts council. They're also in the latest installment of *Craft in America* on PBS… *Days of Summer by the Pond,* a wall sculpture by **Christian Burchard,** took the $5,000 top prize in the **Society of Contemporary Craft**'s biennial, "Transformation 7: Contemporary Works in Wood, the Elizabeth R. Raphael Founder's Prize" (at the SCC gallery in Pittsburgh through Jan. 2). **Katie Hudnall** and **Matthias Pliessnig** earned honorable mention, and **Travis Townsend** a merit award.

Changes

With founder Bonnie Marx moving on, the Marx-Saunders Gallery in Chicago has become the **Ken Saunders Gallery,** keeping its focus on glass art. The gallery recently showed work by Illinois State University students who received scholarship awards from the Midwest Contemporary Glass Art Group, including *Translating Interactions* ❺ by William Carson… Elsewhere in the Windy City, **Dubhe Carreño Gallery** is now in the West Loop arts district, offering more sculpture, paintings and works on paper along with its specialty, ceramic art… Citing the tough economy as "too much for even us seasoned veterans to manage," JoAnn Edwards and her brother, Seb Hamamjian, have closed their **Tercera Gallery** in Palo Alto, CA, after 31 years. On the upside, the **San Francisco Museum of Craft + Design,** which they founded and also run, just celebrated a fifth anniversary and will move to the city's SoMa (South of Market) arts district… Just opened in downtown Ashland, OR: the **Ashland Art Center,** a nonprofit multimedia space for resident artists and the community (AshlandArtisanGallery.com).

Taking Note

Richard Jolley will create a major installation in glass and metal for the Great Hall of the **Edward Larrabee Barnes**-designed **Knoxville Museum of Art,** TN… The **Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft** helped commission two local artists to create works for the new Norton Brownsboro Hospital in Louisville: in the chapel, a pair of stained-glass windows by **Laura Mentor** entitled *Of the Earth–Healing Plants and Trees of America,* and in the atrium, **Johnny Gordon**'s *Arborvitae (Tree of Life),* an 18-foot-high sculpture in copper and stained glass… New black diabase benches by Swedish designers

Lang photo Sharon Edwards-Russell.



5

Ulla and **Gustav Kraitz** grace the entrance of New York's **Museum of Arts and Design**… Artist and glass historian **William Gudenrath** has been elected president of the Fellows of the **Corning Museum of Glass**, Corning, NY… **Radhika Subramaniam,** a curator whose interests include cultural exchange and cross-disciplinary encounters, has become director of the **Sheila C. Johnson Design Center** at Parsons The New School for Design in New York City… **The Museum of Contemporary Craft** and the **Pacific Northwest College of Art**, both in Portland, OR, have entered into a joint operations agreement, leading up to formal integration. The move, said PNCA president **Tom Manley**, "allows the Museum to re-center itself and grow in a more measured and viable manner, [enhances] the educational experience at PNCA for current and future students, and enables the College to explore new graduate offerings."

In Remembrance

The master cabinetmaker **James Krenov**, 88, whose teaching and lyrical writings on working with wood made▸

Carson photo Jo-Nell Sieren.

OR / Portland
4 Museum of Contemporary Craft
The Academy is Full of Craft
to Jan. 9
museumofcontemporarycraft.org
Aided with a 3-D timetable, works in the museum's ceramics collection, including Patti Warashina's 1969 *Egg in Grass (Lidded Jar)* chronicle the medium's evolution.

PA / Philadelphia
Design Center at Philadelphia University
Lace in Translation
to Apr. 3
philau.edu/DesignCenter
Artists/designers Tord Boontje, Demakersvan and Cal Lane draw inspiration from the center's Quaker Lace archives.

WI / Racine
Racine Art Museum
The Donna Schneier Collection: Art Jewelry of the 1980s and 1990s
to Jan. 3
ramart.org
The debut exhibition documents jewelry in both costly and nonprecious materials.

France / Sars-Poteries
Musée-Atelier du Verre
Scott Chaseling: La Source
to Feb. 22
musenor.com
Chaseling's glasswork from his residency in Sars-Poteries.

4



him a revered figure in the studio furniture world, died Sept. 9 in Fort Bragg, CA. Born in Siberia to Russian parents, young Krenov moved with them to Alaska and later Seattle, where as a teen he built boats. As an adult he learned cabinetmaking at the Carl Malmsten school in Stockholm, and went on to maintain his own woodshop in Sweden for over 20 years. In 1981 he moved to northern California to establish a fine woodworking school at the College of the Redwoods, and taught there until his retirement in 2002. He advocated a personal, intuitive approach to furniture making, grounded in technical excellence, facility with hand tools and sensitivity to the nuances of wood. Krenov's books–including *A Cabinetmaker's Notebook* (1976), *The Fine Art of Cabinetmaking* (1977), *The Impractical Cabinetmaker* (1979), *Worker in Wood* (1981), and *With Wakened Hands* (2000)–are considered essential reading for the serious woodworker. He was a Fellow of the American Craft Council and received the Furniture Society's Award of Distinction.

Alice Kagawa Parrott, 80, the acclaimed weaver and ACC Fellow, died Sept. 11 in Santa Fe, NM. Hawaiian-born and Cranbrook-trained, Parrott drew inspiration from various cultures–her own Japanese heritage as well as Native American, Mexican and Guatemalan craft traditions. Her textiles, woven of yarn she spun and dyed herself, ranged from clothing and accessories to large public tapestry commissions and hangings shown in art museums. She also made the colorful wool ponchos worn for nearly 30 years by Santa Fe Opera ushers.

Ted Nierenberg, 86, founder and president of Dansk International Designs, known for its elegant tableware and early popularization of the Scandinavian Modern style, died July 31 in Armonk, NY. As volunteer president of the American Craft Council from 1979 to 1980 he led the organization through a pivotal period of growth and change, including the transition of its magazine, *Craft Horizons*, to American Craft.

William J. Mahoney, 88, a potter and the former chair of the Department of Art and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, where he was professor emeritus, died Aug. 30.

6

























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Council News

The American Craft Show Baltimore
As a new year approaches, the Council is busy preparing for its 34th annual show in February at the Baltimore Convention Center, the largest juried, indoor craft show in the nation. Buyers can save time by pre-registering online until Feb. 18 at craftcouncil.org/wholesale for badges to access the wholesale event (Feb. 23–24). Now running for four days, the retail portion will take place Feb. 25–28.

There will be several opportunities for wholesale buyers to mix and mingle, including complimentary continental breakfast, educational seminars and roundtables with leading experts in the field. For the second consecutive year, Canadian makers will be among the 700 talented artists presenting their work. Special exhibition categories, at both wholesale and retail portions of the show, include the debut of Lawn & Garden and repeat appearances of Craft4Kids and Green Craft as well as School-to-Market, which builds a bridge between academic study and the craft marketplace. This year the Council invited students from the Rhode Island School of Design and Savannah College of Art and Design to curate a section for their work.

At the retail show the work of 15 AltCraft Artists will once again be on view. This bustling section celebrates the burgeoning indie movement. Demonstrations offer even more opportunities for visitors to interact with expert makers and learn about craft.

Artists Honored At San Francisco Show
At the American Craft Show in San Francisco, held Aug. 14–16, Awards of Excellence were presented to Jeung-Hwa Park of Providence, RI, for her fashion accessories, Los Angeles ceramist Maria White, and Francesca Vitali of Rochester, NY, for her paper jewelry, including *Girasole Ring* ❶.

The top award for booth design went to Niki Ulehla of San Francisco for her display of jewelry. Jennifer McCabe, the director of the San Francisco Museum of Craft and Folk Art was the invited juror. View work by all winners at the Council News section on americancraftmag.org.

Domestic Subversion

STORY BY
Elizabeth Lopeman

Laura Splan disturbs our notions of beauty and femininity by crafting traditionally feminine objects out of unpredictable materials. For her series Trousseau, the Brooklyn-based artist uses cosmetic facial peel in lieu of fabric to craft women's gloves, fans and negligees. The material, a plastic-based gel that dries on the skin before being peeled off, retains impressions of hairs and pores and gives the impression of shed epithelial tissue. "There is at once beauty in its fragility and repulsion in its corporeal source," says Splan. After the initial construction the pieces are machine-embroidered–a process she says took "a lot of trial and error"–with delicate representations of chemical and anatomical structures. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter for functions of sex, sleep and appetite, appears on a negligee; retinal rods and cones on a fan; and naso-lacrimal glands and ducts on a handkerchief.

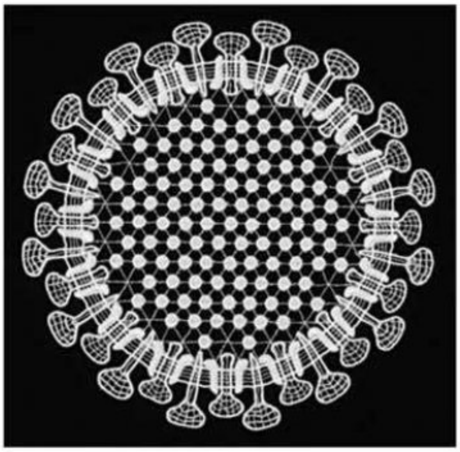
While her materials change, all of the work has a relationship to the body and most of it has a foundation in textiles. This winter five of Splan's virus-shaped doilies are being exhibited in a group show at the Jönköping County Museum in Jönköping, Sweden. Though historically doilies are handcrafted, Splan likes the idea of making them with a computer-programmed embroidery machine as a response to postmodern life. "Here the maker is sitting by the glow of the computer screen instead of by the light of the fireplace. It's a 21st-century process for our 21st-century domestic landscape," she says. Like viruses, doilies can and have been passed from one generation to the next. They are consistent with Splan's interest in what she calls "domestication of the visceral," or a heightened awareness of the microbial world in our homes as we've become accustomed to thoughts of bioterrorism, health epidemics and antibacterial products. Our ideas about traditionally handcrafted domestic objects are subverted by the use of materials with a direct connection to the body. The work examines "how the cultural landscape defines and prescribes our gender, sexuality and sense of worth," says Splan. It also suggests that those cultural prescriptions come with a cost to the body, which makes admiring the beautiful aesthetic of the objects feel ironic and, at times, uncomfortable.

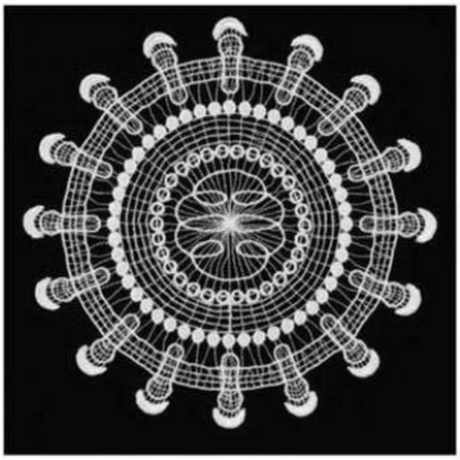
Perhaps the most evocative material in Splan's quiver is her own blood, a perfect medium for toying with our perceptions of what is beautiful and what is revolting. "The process sort of reconnects the somatic experience with the psychological or neurological," she explains. All of the drawings done with blood are from a fine-tip pen, so the lines are like delicate sepia threads. In the first series of drawings rendered with blood, called Thought Patterns, are images of pyramidal cells and dendrites, but the drawings look like lacey foliage. Splan says using blood gives her a "sense of aesthetic freedom" because of its reflexive relationship to the content, while the fine lines allow for a more formal approach to drawing. Her newest drawings play with the formal minimalist square with grid lines that give the appearance of fine muslin. "There was something very methodical and meditative about the process that reminded me of knitting and needlework. So I suppose it was somewhat logical that I would combine the idea of handmade textiles with blood-drawing work," says Splan.

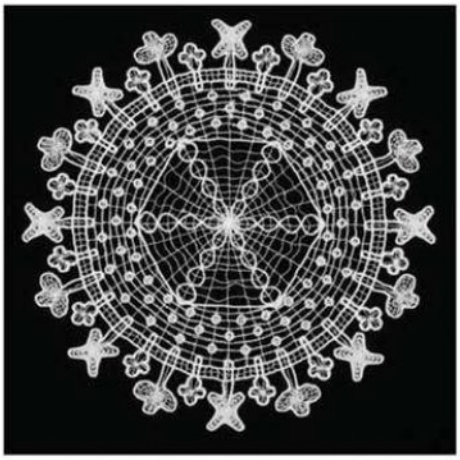
"We've become the material," said curator Steven Skov Holt in a lecture in which he discussed Splan's pieces in his 2008 show called "Manufractured" at the Museum of Contemporary Craft in Portland, OR. By using the body as material for textile-based craft, historically thought of as women's work, Splan shifts the conversation about her work in a way that hearkens back to Miriam Schapiro's *femmage* pieces. But in its nearly painful intimacy with the body, Splan's work has a fresh and universal application: all viewers have their own bodies to contemplate. "It's an experiment of sorts to see if the biological can transcend the cultural and vice versa," says Splan, "so using actual blood or a real beauty product may be the only empirically sound method of answering these questions."

Elizabeth Lopeman is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Portland, OR.

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laurasplan.com



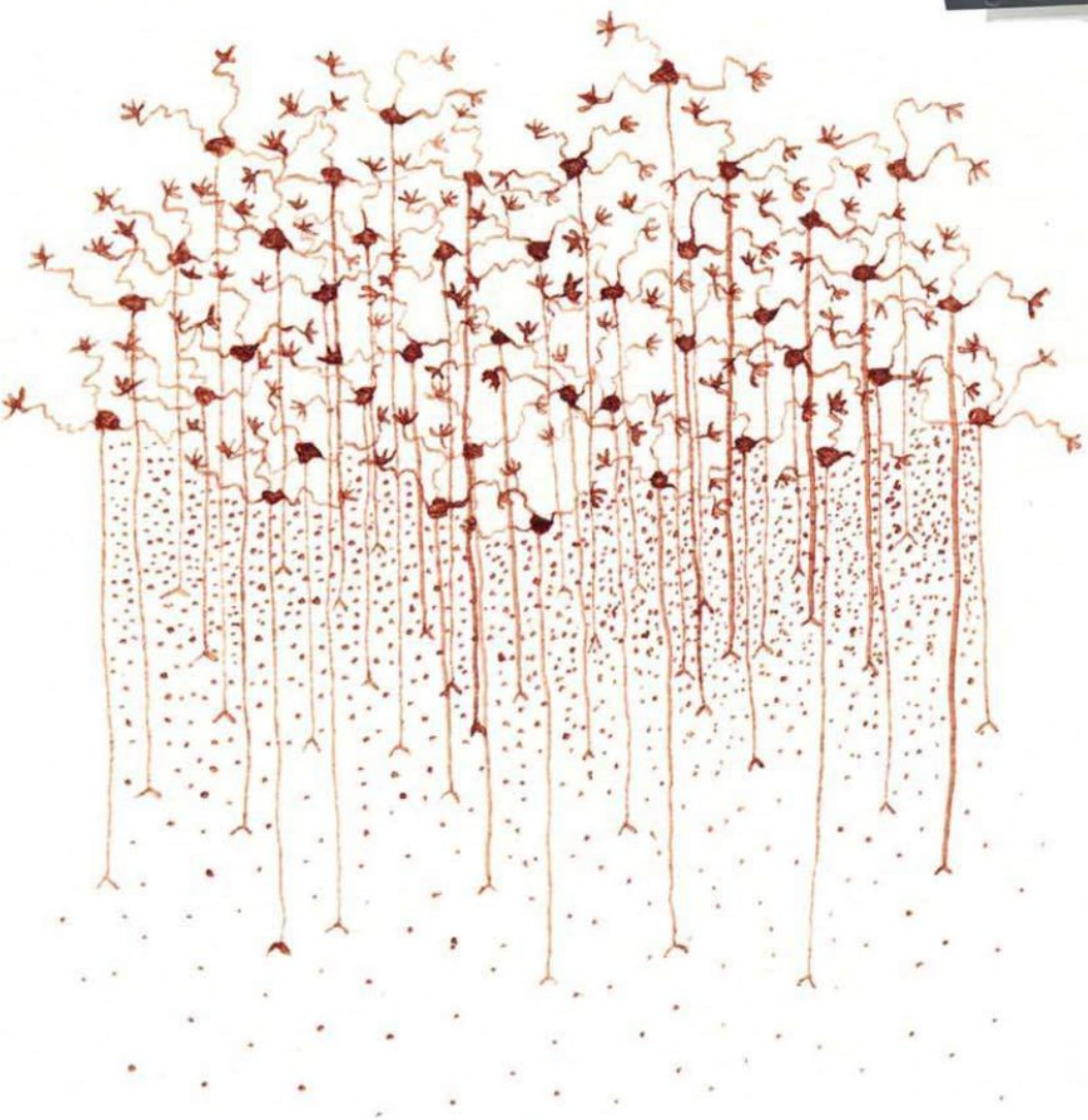




Facial peel, a plastic-based gel that dries on the skin before being peeled off, retains impressions of hairs and pores and gives the impression of shed epithelial tissue.





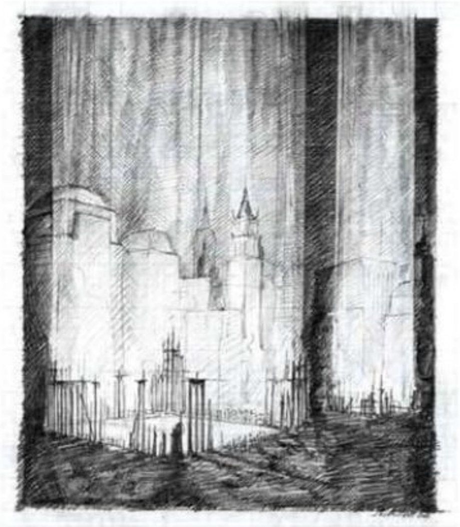


Opposite:
Doilies series, 2004, ***SARS, HIV, Herpes,*** free-standing computerized machine-embroidered lace on velvet, each 16¾ x 16¾ in. framed.

Top Left:
Gloves, 2008, cosmetic facial peel, mixed media, 1 x 12 x 3½ in. each.

Top Right:
Trousseau series, 2008, detail of hope chest, machine and hand embroidery with thread on cosmetic facial peel, mixed media, dimensions variable.

Left:
Thought Patterns series, 2003, blood on watercolor paper, 12 x 12 in.



Left:
Tribute in Light memorial sketch, Sept. 13, 2001. An annual light installation first realized in 2002.

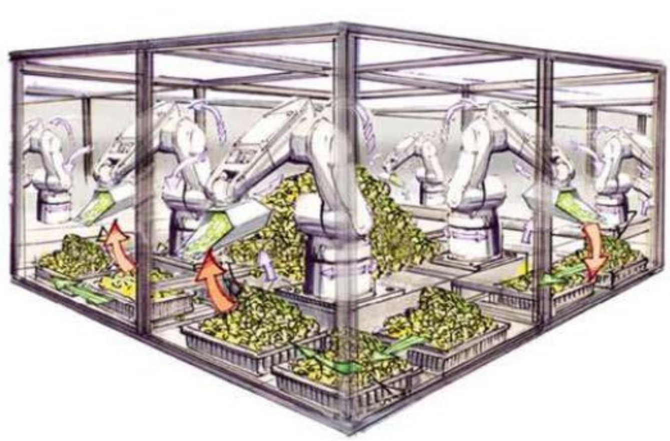
Below:
Boar's Head commercial, 2006, concept sketch and film still from onion scooper set, director Greg Ramsey.

Opposite right:
Avon "Bond Girl" commercial, 2008, concept sketch of wall safe prop, detail still of safe, set still with Gemma Arterton.

Opposite far right:
Hewlett-Packard/ Disney Rocket Transporter commercial, 2003, prop concept sketch, film still, scale model with LaVerdiere.

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The Craft of Illusion

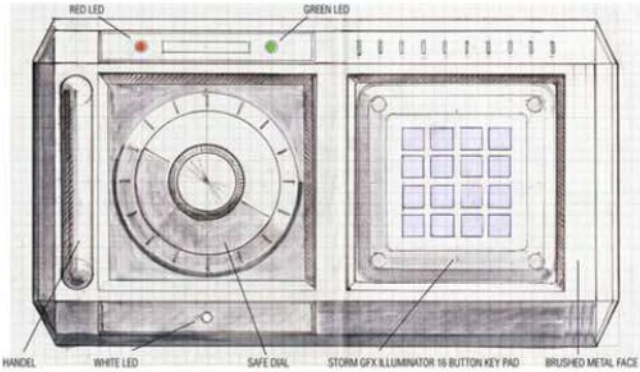
STORY BY
Jeremy Lebensohn

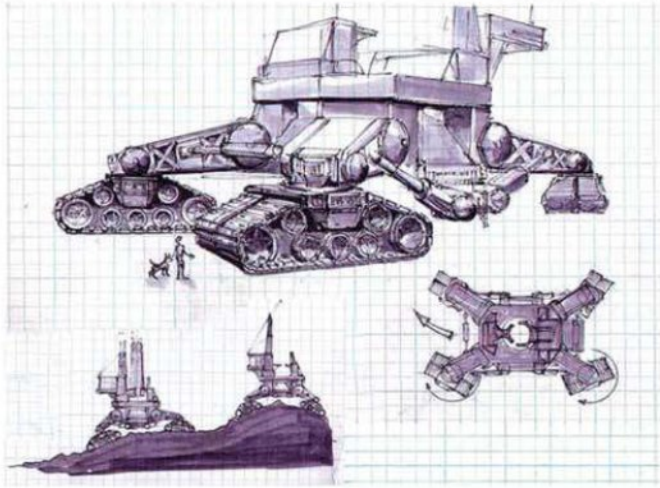
Production designer Julian LaVerdiere creates imagined worlds that only seem real.

After visiting the New York City studio of production designer Julian LaVerdiere, I may never see another commercial without being aware of the elaborately collaborative and warp-speed process that goes into it. The Cooper Union- and Yale-trained former sculptor has locked into a world where his passions, talent and discipline converge to create images as ephemeral as the last shampoo ad you muted on TV or as memorable as *Tribute in Light*, a 9/11 memorial ❶.

As a child, LaVerdiere learned to throw pots under the guidance of his father, the ceramic sculptor Bruno LaVerdiere. Later, as a teenager accompanying his father when he taught workshops at the Penland and Haystack craft schools, Julian took jewelry making and metalwork. He had already been introduced to metal and sculpture by his grandfather, an inventor, aviation mechanic and a master fly-tier. Although today he feels that his aesthetic and material interests couldn't be more different from his father's, he says, "If it weren't for my father, I don't think I'd have gone into the arts." Years later, using a metal lathe in an advanced physics class at Yale, he remembered how similar it felt to throwing a pot on a wheel.

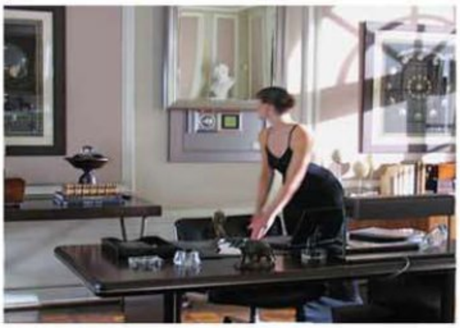
LaVerdiere's entry into production design work is the result of following his





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nature; most of his colleagues come from art or architectural backgrounds and chose it as the most direct medium in which to realize visions. It became clear to LaVerdiere, after apprenticing in several scenic shops, that he wanted to control the design.

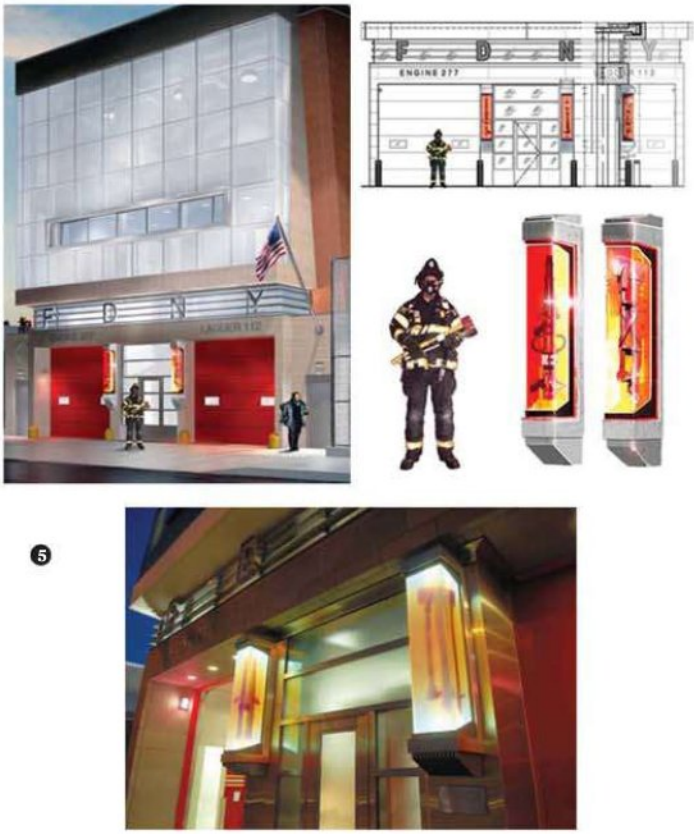
Now, beginning with delicately detailed drawings that have a life of their own, LaVerdiere creates entire sets or key figures in an imagined world, often in fractional scale to the finished image. A rocket device the size of a car appears on film to dwarf a house ❹; a vast sandwich factory springs from props and mirrors in a four-foot cube ❷. In this last set, even after the line between reality and reflection was disclosed, the illusion persisted with a stubborn veracity.

Though LaVerdiere possesses the hand/eye skills to make many of the fantastical objects himself that he's able to conceive and draw, he now contracts scenic shops to fabricate his designs and can direct them to achieve the exacting detail required. In these sets he combines found objects, kitchen accessories and industrial and construction supplies in a seamless concoction that may not exist in the real world but still seems recognizable. For one client, a cosmetics company, he created from existing hardware, electronics and custom-machined parts the facade of a hidden safe that looks so real you wonder what it contains ❸.

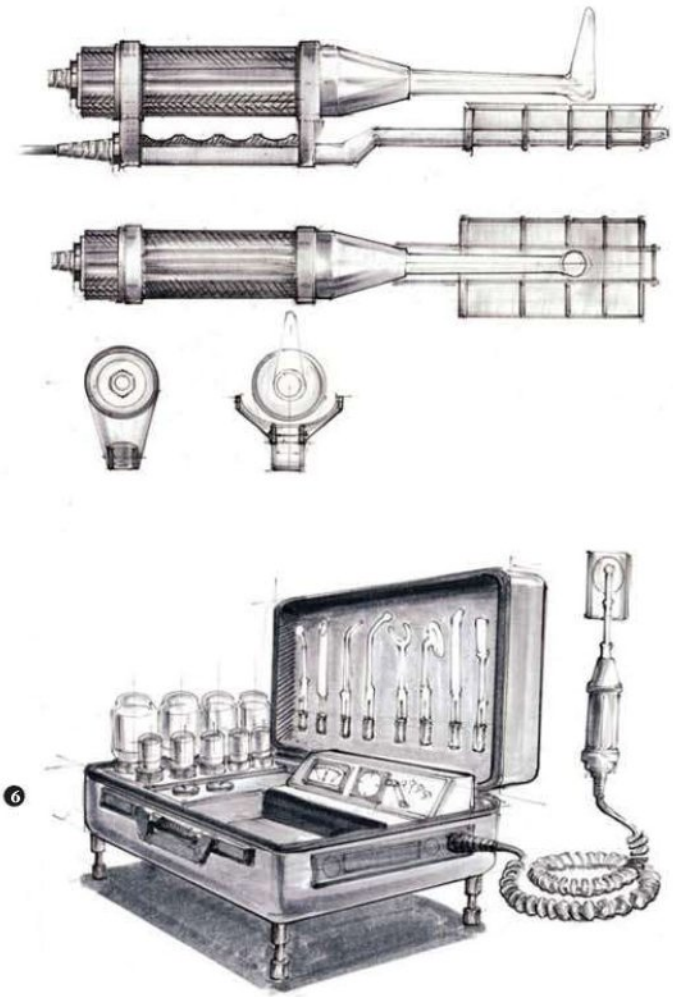
LaVerdiere's perhaps best-known work is *Tribute In Light*, what has become an annual memorial to those who perished in the 9/11 attacks. Designed with Paul Myoda as an image for the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 23, 2001, in response to a request for artists' reactions to the attacks, the image of the twin beams of light ghosting the downed Twin Towers also appeared on the cover of *Art in America* that November. Realized in March 2002 as an installation consisting of 88 searchlights placed next to the World Trade Center site, *Tribute*▸

Below:
Sentinel Lanterns, 2007, an FDNY public art commission, concept sketches and plans, work installed on FDNY Engine Co. 277 Ladder 112.

Right:
Concept sketches for brainwashing instrument, 2009, for the 2010 film *The Adjustment Bureau* with Matt Damon.



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in Light was produced by the public art organization Creative Time and the Municipal Art Society, working with city agencies and backed by Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

Following that public work, LaVerdiere received a grant from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program to create twin lanterns commemorating the valor of all firemen for a newly completed firehouse in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. Although the first design centered on the concept of an eternal flame with actual ignited gas, this idea proved logistically too difficult. LaVerdiere's solution, *Sentinel Lanterns*, 2007❺, flanking the entrance, reveals, embedded in 4-foot-by-14-inch billets of cast acrylic, a fireman's ax and Halligan bar (a forcible entry tool) in one, and a high-pressure water cannon in the other. With lamps focused through the column from above and below, columns of light reminiscent of the Twin Towers guard the firehouse while the objects speak to the spirits of the lost firemen.

Lying seductively on LaVerdiere's desk as I concluded my interview was an ultraviolet-ray machine (an early-20th-century medical cure-all) that he was in the process of combining with 1950s vacuum tubes and more recent electronic parts to become a brainwashing machine in a forthcoming Matt Damon film, *The Adjustment Bureau*❻. We are supplied with enough visual cues to ground us but left clueless as to what's going on inside the device; thus the trap is set for the suspension of disbelief. With his uncanny eye, LaVerdiere resides comfortably in this dichotomy, preferring to engage the almost real, the barely plausible and the totally imagined in a single frame.

Jeremy Lebensohn owns a sculptural and architectural metal fabrication studio in Brooklyn.

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julianlaverdiere.com











Bigger, Better, More: The Art of Viola Frey

By Jody Clowes

Racine Art Museum
Apr. 24 – Aug. 16, 2009
Racine, WI
ramart.org



Photo Michael Tropea, courtesy of Artists' Legacy Foundation.

"Bigger, Better, More," the first retrospective since 1981 of Viola Frey's work, isn't actually very big. An exercise in thoughtful distillation, it manages to spotlight Frey's recurring themes, passionate exploration of color and increasingly bold use of scale with just 22 well-chosen pieces. Making the selections must have been wrenching. Frey was phenomenally productive: although her sculpture sold consistently, her 15,000-square-foot warehouse/studio was still crammed with work when she died in 2004.

Frey, of course, is best known for her brilliantly colored, monumental ceramic figures. Startlingly fresh when they emerged in the early 1980s, these figures have become icons of 20th-century ceramics, so familiar that it's easy to take them for granted. It's a revelation to step back and see them in a fuller context. At the Racine Art Museum, the most iconic works weren't even visible from the first gallery, which was dominated by a raucous row of smaller, densely composed sculptures dating from 1969 to 1980. It was thrilling to round the corner and sense the scale ramping up, as the life-size *Mrs. National Geographic,* 1977–78, and *Double Self,* 1978, gave way to the imposing *Double Grandmothers with Black and White Dresses,* 1982, and two enormous men in power suits. The exhibition is fortified by some of Frey's most evocative paintings and pastels and a handful of her luscious, inscrutable plates. Frey established her national reputation as a sculptor, but her paintings and works on paper are like windows into the sculptures' world, revealing their chaotic relationships and emotional lives. Her plates and earlier sculptures carry much of the same thematic freight, creating a dynamic call and response around the gallery.

What impressed me most, however—I'm embarrassed I hadn't fully grasped it before—was Frey's extraordinary range. With her strong work ethic, well-honed technique and deep grounding in art history, archaeology, color theory, social politics and pop culture, she must have been an unstoppable force in the studio. She was a brash, confident draftsman, with the chops for everything from delicate impressionistic dabs to moody, slashing silhouettes, funky brushwork and a hopped-up wiggly line that riffs on 18th-century painted porcelain. Her glaze surfaces run the gamut from dusty matte to bright drippy gloss and the dry sheen of Egyptian paste. As her figurative pieces



Opposite:
Double Self, 1978, ceramic with glazes, left, 61½ x 18½ x 17 in.

Left:
Family Portait, 1995 ceramic with glazes, 84 x 82⅝ x 34⅝ in.

Below:
Red Buddha, 1994, ceramic with glazes, 25 x 25 x 6 in.



Family Portrait photo Lee Stalsworth, collection of Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden / *Red Buddha* photo Joseph Rudinec, collection of Butler Institute of American Art.

Frey was a brash, confident draftsman, with the chops for everything from impressionistic dabs to slashing silhouettes, funky brushwork and a hopped-up wiggly line that riffs on 18th-century porcelain.

grew larger, their surfaces shifted from painterly naturalism in muted tones to a deeply textured, stark white glaze brushed with sharp blue, acid yellow, and angry oranges and reds. Frey's vocabulary of form was equally broad, embracing a range of exuberant, multifarious works often described as bricolage–sculptures and plates that combine a dizzying array of imagery, and large groups of assembled figures–alongside the elemental giant statues.

Frey's work is full of seeming contradictions. The giant figures with their enigmatic expressions are obvious to the point of being (her word) dumb, while the paintings and bricolage pieces are witty and open-ended. Her subject matter is avowedly autobiographical, and yet many of the images take on mythic stature: Mr. and Mrs. Everyman imbued with the aura of Greek *kouroi.* She piled realistically molded dolls and figurines into illogical, confusing abstractions, tossing them like word salad. Although Frey viewed her work as a totality, its connective tissues are not immediately apparent. Perhaps most fundamental is her obsession with figurines, which spilled out of the corners of her Oakland home and studio. She loved their emotional resonance, and favorites occur again and again: a rooster, a jointed male doll, a skeleton and a baseball player, among others. In Frey's paintings the figurines and sculptures in her studio come to life, jostling one another in a tumult of chaotic energy. The figurines reflect Frey's democratic impulse, in which sentimental knickknacks hold their own alongside large-scale, "serious" sculpture. I don't sense a jot of irony in Frey's approach to these goofy figurines; I think she respected their dignity. The figurines in *Family Portrait,* 1995, for example, read as emblems of emotion as well as personages in their own right. In Frey's world, they are simply part of the family.

The video playing in the gallery, while insightful and well put together, left an unfortunate impression of Frey as a misunderstood, even tragic figure. Having watched this, I found myself dredging up psychodrama in the repeated images of men looming in doorways and the huge, melancholy nude *Weeping Woman,* 1990–91–an impulse I resented. Frey's work evokes a wide spectrum of emotion, from fury to profound love. Her complex achievement transcends the particulars of mere personal history.

Jody Clowes is a curator and writer from Madison, WI.

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Co-organized by the Racine Art Museum with the Gardiner Museum, Toronto, the exhibition is on view at the Gardiner, Sept. 10, 2009–Jan. 10, 2010, and travels to the Museum of Arts and Design, New York City, Feb. 3–May 30, 2010, and the Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, Aug. 13–Dec. 5, 2010. The 134-page catalog is $50 hardcover, $30 softcover.

Right:
Desk Chair, ca. 1898–99, oak, 53 15/16 x 15 15/16 x 16 7/8 in., with Anna Katharine Green.

Like the pottery of his contemporary George Ohr, Rohlfs's work resides betwixt and between, a giddy fusion of nostalgic and progressive design that reflects the lively push and pull of his era.



Photo Michael W. Davidson and Florida State University, promised gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by American Decorative Art 1900 Foundation.

The Artistic Furniture of Charles Rohlfs

By Jody Clowes

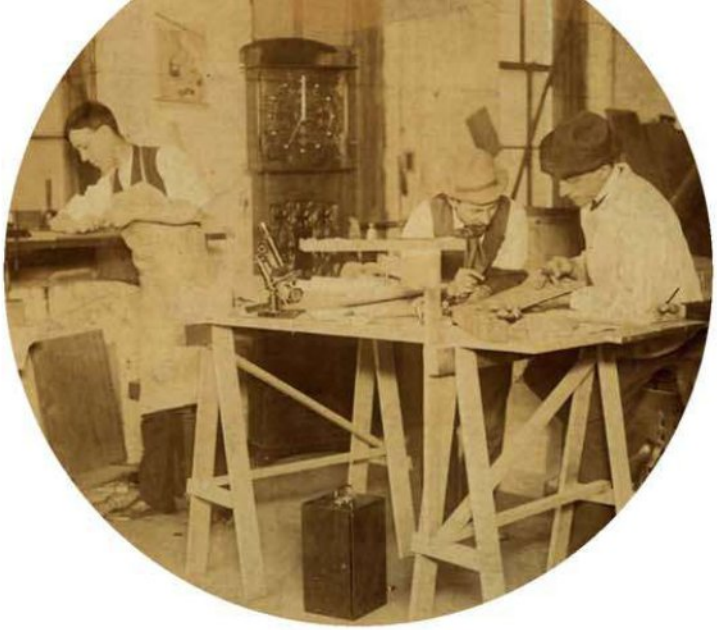
Milwaukee Art Museum
Milwaukee, WI
June 6 – Aug. 23, 2009
mam.org

Charles Rohlfs's furniture doesn't fit art history's boxes. Gothic Revival? Heavy oak with elaborate metal fittings, yes; but decades too late and far too eccentrically ornamented. It's also a bit late for the Aesthetic Movement. With its solid rectilinear outlines, Rohlfs's furniture is often allied to the Arts and Crafts Movement. But while his work is mostly built with straightforward plank construction, more often than not it's held together with plugged screws; and its elaborate carved and pierced decoration seems better suited to the overstuffed languor of a Victorian parlor than an upright Arts and Crafts room. Most of all, Rohlfs's highly individualistic carving and fretwork simply defy categorization. Scholars have invoked virtually the entire spectrum of late-19th-century eclecticism as design influences, from Chinese to Islamic, Romanesque to Louis Sullivan-esque. Strangely, almost all of these suggestions seem plausible. Like the pottery of his contemporary George Ohr, Rohlfs's work resides betwixt and between, a giddy fusion of nostalgic and progressive design that reflects the lively push and pull of his era.

The intriguing eccentricity of Rohlfs's designs attracted museum curators to his work in the 1970s, and dealers have priced his furniture at the top tier, in line with pieces attributed to Gustav Stickley and Frank Lloyd Wright. Active for just 10 years (1897–1907), Rohlfs appears to have produced no more than a few hundred pieces. He made halfhearted efforts to build up inventory and attract customers, but lacking real financial pressure Rohlfs focused his energy on ambitious, experimental design. Over 40 of his best pieces are on view in this exhibition, the first to explore Rohlfs's career in depth and give credit to his wife and sometime artistic collaborator, Anna Katharine Green. The show is fueled in large part by the energy of Bruce Barnes, one of Rohlfs's earliest, most devoted collectors and president of the American Decorative Arts 1900 Foundation; Barnes's partner, art historian Joseph Cunningham, curated the show and authored its exceptionally thorough catalog.

Rohlfs was a fascinating character. An aspiring actor who described Shakespeare as his master, he grew up in working-class Brooklyn. By age 18 he was employed as a patternmaker for an iron foundry, a trade that required carving skills but minimal engagement with the structural properties of wood. Rohlfs rose through the ranks to become a designer, creating decorative cast-iron stoves that were marketed as artistic furnishings. When he married Green, a successful novelist, her income gave him the freedom to pursue the stage full-time.





Far Left:
Candelabrum, 1903, ebonized and gold-rubbed oak, kappa shell, copper, 17 x 16¾ x 7 in.

Left:
Charles Rohlfs in his workshop with George Thiele (far left) and Roland Rohlfs (right), ca. 1901–2.

Bottom:
Tall-Back Rocking Chair, 1901, oak, 56½ x 18 x 33 in.

Candelabrum photo Gavin Ashworth, © American Decorative Art 1900 Foundation / Workshop photo collection of Winterthur Library / *Tall-Back Rocking Chair* photo Tom Little, collection of Carnegie Museum of Art.

But his acting career was short-lived. Underemployed and restless, in 1896 Rohlfs began building furniture for use in their home, and within a few years had established a professional shop.

A natural showman, Rohlfs downplayed his experience in the stove industry and presented himself as a cultivated man with a genius for design. Since Oscar Wilde had singled out cast-iron stoves for censure in his lectures on taste, Rohlfs may have wished to distance himself from that industry—even though his own designs were in keeping with Wilde's aesthetic. Yet much of Rohlfs's furniture is intriguingly similar to his stoves, which relied on elaborate patterns and textures to enliven boxy, monochrome forms. His most successful pieces, like the *Desk Chair*, 1898–99, *Tall-Back Rocking Chair,* ca. 1901, and *Standing Desk*, 1902–4, marry form and ornament brilliantly. The simplicity and clarity of the *Desk Chair* restrains its radically asymmetrical carved design; likewise, in the *Tall-Back Rocking Chair* and *Standing Desk*, complex ornamental passages are quieted by broad expanses of undecorated wood. The visual buzz of Rohlfs's swirling patterns against oak's pronounced grain creates an intensity and drama quite alien to the gravitas of Arts and Crafts furniture. In pieces that strike the right balance, the result is wonderfully exciting. But theater critics complained of Rohlfs's penchant for chewing scenery, and at times his furniture reflects the same tendency. His most inventive designs have a turbulent energy that borders on frenzy, with wild fret-sawn profiles and thickets of densely carved ornament.

As an industrial patternmaker, Rohlfs had become intimately familiar with the class divisions between craftsmen and designers. He clearly knew which side of that line he wanted to occupy and embraced the role of auteur as an industrial designer and as an actor. As a furniture maker, Rohlfs was not wedded to process or craftsmanship. Although he was devoted to wood as a material, what mattered most to him was artistic originality and individual expression. Through this shift in emphasis, Rohlfs and a handful of his contemporaries in this and other mediums quietly, almost inadvertently, invented a new vocation: the studio crafts. His work and career encapsulate the contradictory aspirations and assumptions that still inspire and plague the field today.
Jody Clowes is a curator and writer from Madison, WI.

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The exhibition is at the Dallas Museum of Art through Jan. 3, 2010, and tours to the Carnegie Museum of Art, Jan. 30 – Apr. 25, 2010, and other venues. The hardcover catalog is $65 from Yale University Press, yale press.yale.edu.



Right:
Christyl Boger
Sea Toy, 2007, glazed earthenware, gold luster, 28 x 26 x 16 in.



Each artist skillfully joins individual details and moments into penetrating vignettes, with marked contradictions of form and content.

Staged Stories

By Sarah Tanguy

Renwick Craft Invitational 2009
Renwick Gallery
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Aug. 7, 2009 – Jan. 3, 2010
Washington, DC
americanart.si.edu/Renwick

From the glistening sensuality of Christyl Boger's earthenware nudes, to the existential limpness of Mark Newport's knitted superhero costumes, the fluid interplay of life forms in SunKoo Yuh's porcelain sculptures and the ethereal musings of Mary Van Cline's glass tableaux, the Renwick Gallery chose four disparate bodies of work for its fourth Invitational. As the title, "Staged Stories," indicates, the exhibition maps a narrative trend with theatrical underpinnings. Rather than using a traditional storyline with a beginning, middle and end, each artist joins individual details and moments into penetrating vignettes, with marked contradictions of form and content.

In Boger's fantasias, the forms of aquatic inflatable toys disrupt the idealized perfection of her figures and hint at their vulnerability. The natural poses–whether reclining or crouching–and fleshy surfaces lend an erotic realism to the neo-classicized bodies modeled through the coil and pinch method. At the same time, the additional surface decoration of gender-coded, pink and blue passages and floral and bodily accents in gold luster evokes the delicate intricacy of Baroque porcelain figurines. But their scale, slightly under life-size, and their simultaneously inward and outward gaze remove them from the conventional realm of status symbol and decoration and thrust them onto the viewer's stage. In contrast to the sculptural ensembles of Bernini and Michelangelo that inspire her, her figures can only aspire to the gods and their entourage cavorting in Baroque fountains.

Male stereotypes meld with childhood memories and daily realities in Newport's brightly colored, hand-knit re-creations. Here the driving force is the comic book superhero,which he turns into an ambivalent symbol of adult protection. At once humorous and spooky, some outfits draw directly from comic books, like *Batman 2*, 2005, while others, including *Every-Any-No Man*, 2005, are Newport's inventions. A feminine touch–that his grandmother taught him complicates his decision to knit, as does knitting's association with women's work–replaces notions of invincibility. The meditative practice, along with the use of cheap acrylic yarn and acnelike bobbles, further deflates the action-figure fantasy. Dangling from hangers, the costumes offer instead the promise of warmth and disguise.

Yuh's ceramic totems reveal inner musings and psychological states. Often rising from low platforms, tight stacks of cartoonish fauna, flora, humans and objects suggest both daily frenzy and symbiotic connection. In *False Start*, 2006, a critique of the Iraq War, jumps in scale heighten the suspense of a machine gun-bearing soldier unaware

Boger, Newport, Yuh photos Gene Young / Boger collection of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson.





Far Left:
Mark Newport
Raw Hide Kid, 2004, acrylic yarn, buttons, 72 x 26 x 6 in.

Left:
SunKoo Yuh
Fortune Pig, 2007, glazed porcelain, 25 x 16 x 15 in.

Bottom:
Mary Van Cline
The Ocean of Memory Within, 2008, photosensitive glass, pâte de verre, 30 x 60 x 6 in.



Van Cline photo Rob Vinnedge, collection of Ms. Patricia Schaefer and Mrs. Tove Stimson.

of a woman strapped with explosives. Cross-cultural sources inspire his practice, including his glazing technique that draws on Tang Dynasty funerary sculpture. Frequently culling ideas for plot and character from preliminary drawings, Yuh carefully builds up his clay forms. Then he cedes control to the kiln, firing twice, once before and once after applying as many as 40 layers of high-fire glazes. The final compositions, with colors bleeding over crackled surfaces, evoke by turn, humor, sadness and menace.

Like Yuh, Van Cline conflates Eastern and Western influences. In particular, aspects of Japanese Noh theater and classical Greek statuary mark her immersive, mixed-media tableaux that feature black and white photographs set in between panes of optical glass or onto photosensitive glass within an architectural context. In *Cycles of Relationship of Time,* 2000, the transparent image of an isolated cove occupies the center of a Shinto-shrine-inspired form, where a draped woman looks down on a man in a fetal pose. Including several pâte de verre components, the work is pierced in the middle and topped with a stylized torii gate, traditionally the portal to sacred ground. But this same opening also thwarts the sense of timelessness by returning the reality of the gallery into focus. Here as elsewhere, Van Cline's enigmatic dramas create serene meditations on the passage of time that extend fully into the viewer's space.

In "Staged Stories," guest curator Kate Bonansinga not only identifies the narrative as an important marker in contemporary craft, but also highlights artists who draw inspiration from the past. As they passionately engage the history of their field and explore the physical nature of materials, they find new ways to riff on tradition and bring out its vast potential. Their stories of transformation trigger lasting impressions of personal and universal experience.

Sarah Tanguy is an independent curator and critic, as well as a curator for the Art in Embassies Program, based in Washington, DC.

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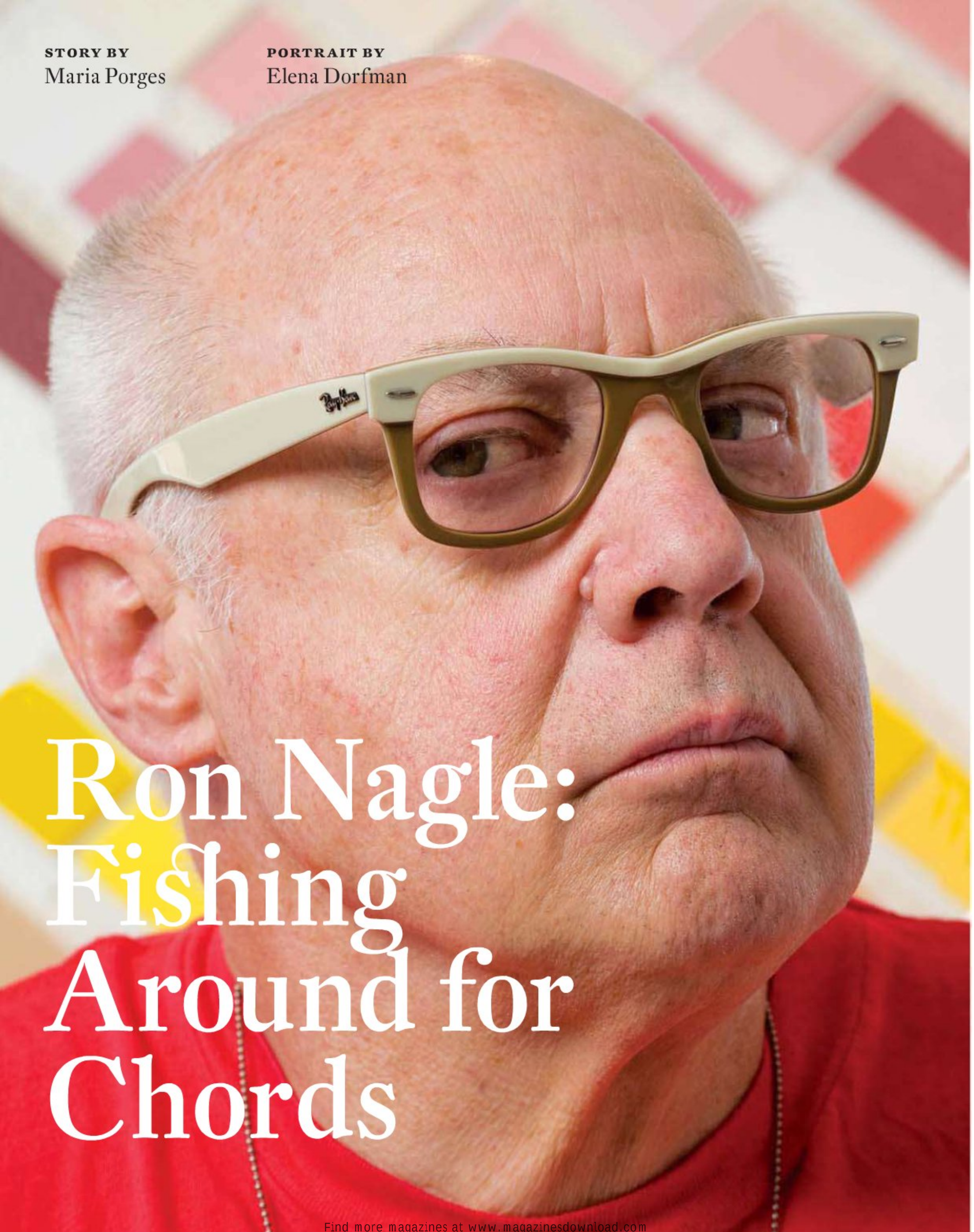
The catalog, text by Kate Bonansinga, is $24.95 from the Renwick Gallery.

More reviews on americancraftmag.org.

STORY BY
Maria Porges

PORTRAIT BY
Elena Dorfman

Ron Nagle: Fishing Around for Chords



Chanformation,
2008, ceramic,
4¼ x 5 x 2¾ in.



Photos of all works Don Tuttle.

Nagle's pieces shine, glow, swoop, curve, and blend—each with its own ghostly presence and haunting silhouette. We don't know what they are, but, clearly, they couldn't be better.—Dave Hickey, "Best of 1998," *Artforum*



Left:
The Blue Dangler,
2008, ceramic,
$6^{1/8}$ x 4 x 4 in.

Opposite:
Clonapiñata,
2008, ceramic,
$4^{3/4}$ x 6 x $4^{3/4}$ in.

Just as a few containers on a table were the painter Giorgio Morandi's lifelong source of inspiration, the cup has been Ron Nagle's. It is extraordinary, therefore, that in the last three years he has begun to move away from it. The very features that have identified the ur-cup nature of his pieces—an opening in the top, a handle on one side, the volumetric representation of a capacity to contain liquid—are no longer always present, or have evolved into even stranger, more improbable forms than in the past. Consider, for example, the features of these two works from 2008: the bumpy, thumb-ish flap on the front of *Clonapiñata*, or the flaccid drip that hangs almost the full length of *The Blue Dangler*'s tall, narrow form. Other works, dubbed Weeoramas, suggest tiny stages or environments—sometimes empty, sometimes occupied by blobs or piles of cubes. And in a show this past May, sculptures Nagle describes as Bookends predominated: two back-to-back, wafer-thin sheets of clay bent into the shape of an L "between which you could sandwich a couple of slim volumes of poetry," as *New York Times* critic Ken Johnson put it. These pieces refer to containment in only the most abstract way.

Nagle notes that the reception of this new work has reflected how the viewer thinks (or feels, to be more precise) about the presence—or absence—of references to the vessel. The art world has welcomed the changes. The craft world, he surmises, has not. There is something ironic about the possibility that, as art turns toward Beauty (and away from theory), craft may be going in the opposite direction—though this, like any other generalization about these two worlds, is far too black and white to represent all the shadings and nuances of their complicated relationship. And it doesn't speak for those who, like Nagle, operate in the sphere where the two overlap—or collide. It can be a difficult position to occupy.

Still, the passage of time has a way of validating creative individuals who choose to be independent of the big, splashy movements of their generation. I'm talking about the kind of makers who seem to have their own GPS—one that follows directions only from a mysterious place within, rather than from the compass points provided by isms. Fifty years into a legendarily iconoclastic career, having sidestepped clay's version of Abstract Expressionism, the goofiness of California Funk and various historicist revivals, Nagle is ascending, slowly but surely, into his rightful position as an influential and highly regarded ceramic artist.

Ceramic artist? I can imagine Nagle's pained expression (as well as that of some of his admirers, including Dave Hickey) at the use of this politically incorrect description. In theory, no maker needs to be identified by medium anymore. The postmodern era's much-vaunted egalitarian attitude toward materials used to make art (*or* craft) supposedly renders such a double-barreled term superfluous. It's wrong even to hint at privileging one material or approach over ▸









Top:
Ron Nagle in his San Francisco studio working on a Weeorama.

Middle and bottom:
Nagle's airbrush jars and underglaze test tiles.

Opposite:
Knights of Franconia, 2008, ceramic, 4½ x 5½ x 2½ in.

another. In this case, however, I use this term to describe the self-imposed limitations that characterize Nagle's practice. Like Morandi, or Robert Ryman (who has used only white paint for decades), Nagle pared things down to a narrow set of parameters early on in his career–within which he has found extraordinary richness.

Another, less inflammatory, description of Nagle might be an artist who "thinks through craft," a phrase that originates with the curator and craft historian Glenn Adamson. The process through which Nagle's extraordinary objects are made is crucial to the achievement of his ideas, but at the same time incidental to our experience of the things themselves. Craft is not the end, but the means–though saying this is in no way meant to belittle or ignore that craft. A thick drip of glaze might hang from the edge of one of his forms, but the perfect shape of that drip is the result of painstaking adjustments. In some pieces, he leaves nothing to chance, carving a faux drip out of clay before the glaze is ever applied. As Nagle puts it, "It isn't how you get there–it's whether or not it works." But it is also important to him that he gets there through clay: "the only material that can achieve the feel and look and purity that I have always been oriented toward."

As Nagle told me, "I'm really much more interested in painting than I am in sculpture. My work is about surface, proportion of color. I learned that from [Josef] Albers, Barnett Newman–and a lot of Japanese stuff. Like a deep green kimono with just a tiny piping of persimmon. Proportion is key. I love oddball color combinations." Since his 20s, Nagle has been involved in a parallel career as a musician and songwriter. When asked if the importance of balance and proportion in his sculpture is reflected in the way he goes about this other pursuit, he replied, "Absolutely. I work in a traditional songwriting format. You've got an intro, a verse, chorus, another verse, maybe a lick, bridge, chorus, out. Something like that. You know what to expect. This kind of predetermined format was part of what was so attractive to me about the cup. You've got a handle but it's also asymmetrical.... It has a foot, an opening–how can you mess around with these, in how many ways? How can you mess around with the proportions, the color? How can you use that shape to do a painting on top of it? As with overdubbing in recording, you can add layer after layer–but in painting, you are building up surface and color. And there's also humor, which is very much part of music, and the people I hang around with–we have a great time and are also totally moved by sadness, sad stuff. Like Johnny Cash, before he died, doing "Wichita Lineman." Or Tom Waits doing "Somewhere" from *West Side Story*. Beautiful. I love combinations of emotions, the tension created by this kind of odd miscasting."

Nagle's distinctive mix of humor and melancholy emerges in his pieces' titles. "It's not what the piece is about, he asserted. "It's more like naming your kid. It's by feel.... This just looked like ›

Photos Elena Dorfman.





A thick drip of glaze might hang from the edge of one of his forms, but the perfect shape of that drip is the result of painstaking adjustments.





Opposite:
The Brown Bender,
2008, ceramic,
6¼ x 4½ x 2¾ in.

Top:
Molly Slobber, 2008,
ceramic,
5½ x 4 x 4 in.

Bottom:
Longin' for Longolis,
2008, ceramic,
5¾ x 4¾ x 1½ in.

it should be *Split Infinity*," he says, pointing to a picture in a catalog from his 2008 show in Belgium. Pieces on nearby pages in this book bear the names *Molly Slobber*, *The Brown Bender*, *Longin' for Longolis* and *Nights of Malta*.

Another 2008 show (at George Adams Gallery in New York) included a clearly related piece titled *Knights of Franconia*. Both *Malta* and *Franconia* are airbrushed in a combination of blue, yellow and violet on a surface that looks like chewed chalk. Each consists of two flattened, roughly rectangular shapes–one larger than the other–emerging from a low dome, beneath the edge of which is a tiny, shiny rim of red. Beyond this resemblance, however, they diverge, making completely different impressions through Nagle's subtle adjustments of color, proportion and hue. *Malta* has a dark weight–an inscrutability, like a locked warehouse at night. In contrast, *Franconia* (the name of a street near Nagle's house in San Francisco) seems to float, like a sunrise over water. Like a grace note (or an electric guitar riff), a tiny edge of yellow at the upper right changes everything.

Nagle's approach to life, music and art–not necessarily in that order–is not conceptual but is based on how things *feel.* He described it as "right brain–thinking without thinking.... Almost everything I have made for the past few years has come from drawings that I do while sitting in bed watching Charlie Chan movies or *The Thin Man*. I've seen some of those movies 20 times. It's more about ambience than 'who done it'–I just like to have it on. And I keep these drawings around, and then I get an idea from one of them." He showed me a stack of these sketches on lined yellow paper. Certain shapes repeat, as they have throughout Nagle's long career. "It's all about how the work moves you. It might be based on a title, a feeling.... Then you start fishing around for chords, and getting a sense of how to build it. Part of a great idea is based on taking that initial glimpse, or spark, and developing it. The things that move me can be, but aren't necessarily, art–a car, a song."

A book chronicling Nagle's life will be coming out in 2010, complete with timelines, pictures and essays. He's also releasing a new solo album–the first in decades–titled *She Lies*. It includes some older songs, some new ones, and even a couple of cover tunes. (*Bad Rice*, his legendary debut album of 1970, is slated for re-release around the same time.) Surely, both the book and Nagle's music will demonstrate the ways in which intuition has guided his process from the beginning, through a process of continual tinkering toward a pared-down perfection.

Maria Porges is an artist and writer who lives in Oakland, CA.

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renabranstengallery.com
georgeadamsgallery.com

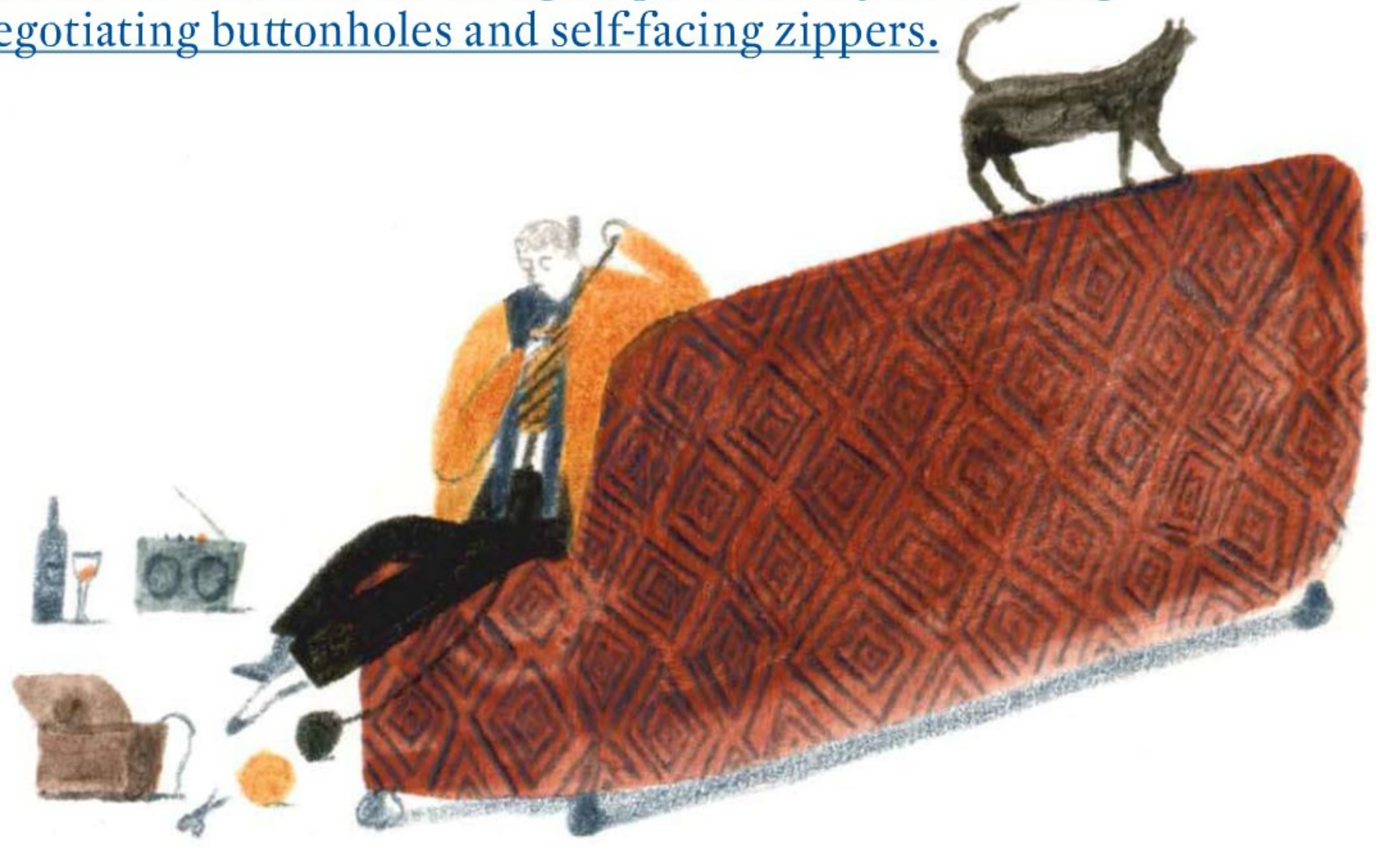
STORY BY
Meribah Knight

ILLUSTRATION BY
Laura Carlin

A Young Crafter Cuts Up Tradition



Over a glass of wine and accompanied by National Public Radio, Meribah Knight spends many an evening negotiating buttonholes and self-facing zippers.





When I first told my mother I was planning on taking a sewing class (registered under home economics) she scoffed at the idea. My friends were also confused. "That is so girly, so retro," they quipped, rolling their eyes. But to me it was anything but girly. It was independence. No malls, no hoarding my allowance to buy the same shirt that every other girl had—just a few yards of fabric and my own ingenuity.

After dabbling in boxer shorts and pajama bottoms, my most ambitious project came my senior year of high school in the form of a snakeskin dress worn with a jewel-encrusted bra boldly peeking out of its plunging neckline. Dolce & Gabbana had released a similar item on the runway that season and I was determined to wear my own version of this fanciful undergarment to my senior prom. Night after night, for three weeks straight, I sat on my living room couch hand sewing one rhinestone after the next onto an Old Navy bikini top, clocking in over 30 hours of meticulous stitching. When I was done, not one bit of black spandex showed through the flock of rhinestones, and it appeared almost identical to its $10,000 counterpart. And so, while most girls arrived at this special night decked out with a date on one arm and a corsage on the other, I arrived stag looking like a cross between a Judith Leiber purse and a naughty Fabergé egg.

Despite the fact that the final ensemble weighed about eight pounds and elicited epic stares and utter confusion from both my parents and fellow students, I walked into the party with my head held high, proud of my creation. This was a far cry from my grandmother's handmade quilts and needlepoint pillows, but then again, those items had been my gateway to the craft. In my own fashionably questionable way, I wanted to pay homage to this tradition, while at the same time chipping away at it.

My grandmother's sewing circle, comprising 12 college-educated Indianapolis housewives, met each Tuesday at 2 p.m. over coffee, sweets and sewing. The group formed in 1941 and continued until too few members remained or their hands were too arthritic and fingers too knobby to grip a needle.

With such a vivid introduction, I have tried to understand why my mother never took up the craft and, moreover, never had the desire to do so. What I have learned is this: My grandmother had one acceptable choice, to stay at home. My mother, who came of age amid the tumult of the 1960s and feminism's second wave, had choices, and a point to prove. I have choices, too. However, they are different from both my grandmother's and my mother's. And I choose to sew.

In 1960, my mother's sophomore year of high school, eight out of ten white married women did not work. This included my grandmother, who had her degree from Butler University but left her job as a social worker when she married my grandfather. For my mother this was never an option. She didn't regard herself as a feminist—to her the term carried a stigma. But she reacted to her times, fleeing from its restrictions. This included handcrafts, which were almost exclusively practiced by women. And against my mother's nontraditionalist life, I would stage a rejection of my own. I would find meaning, relevance and my own rebellion in embracing what my mother had rejected.

For other crafters, a similar narrative unfolded. Faythe Levine, author, curator and director of *Handmade Nation*, a film about the ›





From left to right: The author as an aspiring fashionista; the author's grandfather and her mother; and with her grandmother.



rise of independent crafts and DIY culture, remembers curling up on the couch wrapped tightly in her grandmother's crocheted afghan. Betsy Greer, author of *Knitting for Good*, cherishes the Christmas stocking her grandmother made for her—still a fixture at her holiday celebrations—as well as the moments they bonded over needlepoint and cross-stitch. There was a seminal tactile experience for each one of us that ignited our interest in and penchant for handcrafts, and within each of us was a desire to honor a tradition while at the same time turning it on its head. Our grandmothers had been oppressed by such women's work, our mothers had opposed it and we would elevate it. What emerged was an entirely new domesticity that redefined what it meant to be a woman who worked with her hands. "It is the idea of reclaiming something that was someone else's and making it yours.... It is up to you. There are no rules and that is incredibly empowering," Levine says.

And while the connection may have been lost on me as a teenager, the objective, in hindsight, is obvious. What many saw as antifeminist, this new generation of crafters, me included, saw as the next step toward female self-assertion. "We felt like it was finally OK to take back knitting because we had established ourselves in the workplace," says Greer. "[Feminist predecessors] were trying to change the paradigm, and that is exactly what we are doing."

Today, coinciding with this paradigm shift, is a rejection of mass-produced goods, an overall yearning for self-sufficiency and a way to opt out of commercial culture. In high school I dreaded relying on my parents, fashion trends (minus that bra faux pas) and paltry allowances, and in my adult life I regard with equal dread Wal-Mart and ethically questionable clothing produced overseas. And I am not alone. According to Janome America, the world's largest sewing machine manufacturer, the number of sewing machines imported into the U.S. has increased by a third in the last decade. In 2007, prior to a faltering economy, it had nearly doubled. At the American Sewing Guild, membership has increased steadily by about 15 percent each year.

Moreover, as I find myself spending more time connected to the digital world through my computer screen, I thirst for something tactile. After a long day of gazing at pixels, all I want to do is to touch something real, something three-dimensional. Over a glass of wine and accompanied by National Public Radio, I spend many of my evenings negotiating buttonholes and self-facing zippers. Sewing unplugs me.

Anne Wilson, an artist who teaches weaving and fiber arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, says that 12 years ago her students were predicting a future embedded in digital. Now, she says, "The weaving classes are bursting at the seams. There is so much interest in reengaging with these processes and seeing the digital and tactile world come together."

While I would like to insist that the tactile reigns supreme as I press, stitch, fold and cut, the Internet does play a supplemental role in my sewing experience. Sites like Etsy and Big Cartel are portals for consumers as well as a venue for crafters. These sites allow the makers themselves to sell their wares, creating a cottage industry based on age-old traditions buttressed by the digital age. For recreational crafters and professionals alike, blogs like Whip Up, Knitty, Craftster, BurdaStyle and Get Crafty act as equalizers by connecting across the independent crafting



While I would like to insist that the tactile reigns supreme as I press, stitch, fold and cut, the Internet does play a supplemental role in my sewing experience.

community and in turn keeping crafting close to its folk roots.

"[The] Internet has been the most influential part of why handmade and craft has had a resurgence," Levine says. One of my favorite blogs, Twelve Square, is a perfect example of this integration. What was once an analog quilting bee is now a blog and virtual quilting bee that follows 12 women making 12 quilts in 12 months. A link to their Flickr site will bring you to a complete photo album of the project. It is obvious that despite our desire for a digital respite, crafts have become inextricably linked to the Internet.

I suppose if I were laboring over that same prom dress today I might upload images to my Flickr or Facebook pages and let my crafting comrades ogle at, or rather fashion-police my creation and give me tips on better construction and cheaper materials. Maybe I would even tweet how profoundly tedious it was to stitch one stone after the next, hour after hour. I am an analog girl at heart, so sometimes amid all this technology I get nostalgic about my grandmother and her sewing circle. Is mine bound to exist in cyberspace? Probably so, but I embrace that. It is all part of the paradigm shift. It is a continuation of what I, and other crafters, wanted to make of our reinterpretation of this age-old tradition. When I first began sewing I had a mission of redefinition: Changing the craft from what my grandmother did with it and what my mother thought of it. This felt right, and it still does.

Meribah Knight is a Chicago-based freelance journalist. An essay about sewing through three generations of women in her family is featured in the December issue of O Magazine.

+

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Bravo!

A lawyer, two curators and seven artists are the recipients of the American Craft Council's 2009 Aileen Osborn Webb Awards, named for the Council's founder. The awards, established in the mid-1970s, honor those who have demonstrated outstanding artistic achievement, leadership and service in the craft field. Fellows, nominated and elected by their peers, are makers who have demonstrated extraordinary artistic ability for 25 years or more; nonartists are named Honorary Fellows. The Gold Medal, the highest award for an artist, was this year presented to Katherine Westphal.

The Award of Distinction for Contributions to the Field of Craft designates an individual, organization, institution or corporation that has rendered significant service to the field over a quarter century, and the Award for Philanthropy recognizes exceptional efforts in support of the American Craft Council over the same time period. The 2008 honorees were named in the October/November issue of American Craft; here we extend our respect and gratitude to the 2009 awardees.

Left:
Katherine Westphal
Top Dog, 1991, heat transfer on tapa (bark) cloth, 58 x 42 in.

Right:
Katherine Westphal
Geisha, Geisha, 1989, gourd, heat transfer on rice paper, laminated, 11 x 10½ in.

Opposite:
Katherine Westphal
October: A Walk with Monet, 1992, paper, dyed, heat transfer photocopy, 60 x 51 in.





Westphal photos Tom Grotta.



Aileen Osborn Webb Award for Philanthropy

Paul J. Smith

Through an illustrious career as a curator, lecturer and juror, Paul J. Smith has advanced appreciation of contemporary crafts since joining the staff of the American Craftsmen's Council in 1957. Appointed director of the organization's Museum of Contemporary Crafts (now the Museum of Arts and Design and no longer affiliated with the Council) in 1963, Smith initiated innovative exhibitions in a remarkable range of topics and media. For the museum's 1986 new facility opening, he curated "CRAFT TODAY: Poetry of the Physical," which toured internationally. Retiring in 1987 and named director emeritus, Smith developed a consulting service. He is now organizing the MCC exhibition files for the ACC Library and serving on the boards of the Louis Comfort Tiffany and Lenore G. Tawney foundations. Smith holds an honorary doctorate from Parsons design school and is an ACC Honorary Fellow.

Gold Medal

Katherine Westphal

A playful pioneer of art quilts and a leader of new technology for surface design–especially known for her early use of the color photocopier–Katherine Westphal (b. 1919) also promoted craft wearables, collaged and printed, of cloth or paper. She was an energetic teacher at the University of California, Davis, who made an art appreciation class the place to be, attracting hundreds of students. She retired, emerita, in 1979. For the often-repetitive imagery in her work, she has drawn upon travels with her husband, Ed Rossbach, and other aspects of her life. "Anything I see or experience can pop out in my work, the connection being most often intuitive," she said, and spoke of it being mixed in the "eggbeater" of her mind. Holding her BA and MA from the University of California, Berkeley, Westphal has also created jewelry, books, baskets, drawings, paintings, embroideries and ceramics.







Top left:
Jamie Bennett
Urban Traces 5, brooch, 2007, enamel, gold, copper, 2¼ x 1¾ in.

Bottom left:
Jamie Bennett
Second Record of Spring, 2008, enamel, copper, wood, mirror, 12 x 12 x 2 in.
Collection of Museum of Arts and Design.





Middle:
Bernard Bernstein
Kiddush cup, 2002, sterling silver, 3¾ x 1⅞ in.

Right:
Bernard Bernstein
Torah crown, 1970, sterling silver, 17 x 19 x 3 in.
Collection of Brooklyn Museum.

Fellow
Jamie Bennett

One of the preeminent enamelists in the U.S., Jamie Bennett (b. 1948) has created a body of jewelry noted for painterly surfaces, technical mastery and eclectic cultural references, qualities abundantly displayed in his currently traveling retrospective, "Edge of the Sublime" (and companion book). A graduate of the University of Georgia, Bennett received his MFA from the State University of New York, New Paltz (1974), where he has been a professor of art in the metal program since 1985. He also taught in the Program in Artisanry at Boston University (1980–85). Bennett is fascinated by enameled jewelry as a medium for representing natural forms, but he notes that his floral images are "dislocated and botanically inaccurate, a subjective quality that appeals to me." He avoids mimesis, preferring "to concoct and unravel whatever I work from."

Fellow
Bernard Bernstein

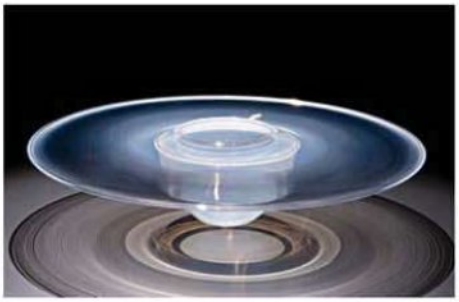
As a metalsmith in New York City for 50 years, Bernard Bernstein (b. 1928) has devoted himself to the design and execution of Jewish ceremonial objects. A graduate of City College, he earned an MFA in silversmithing and jewelry from the Rochester Institute of Technology (1963) and an EdD in creative arts from New York University (1971). He was drawn to Judaica in the late 50s through study with Ludwig Wolpert, a pioneer of modernist ritual objects. Bernstein was on the industrial education faculty at CCNY (1962–86) and since 1988 has taught at the 92nd Street Y. His work is in synagogue, private and museum collections. Bernstein's goal for his Hanukah lamps, Torah ornaments, kiddush cups and spice boxes is that they "promote a special state of mind" by their presence "in a sacred place during a sacred moment."

Urban Traces 5 photo courtesy of Sienna Gallery.

Top:
Benjamin Moore
Interior Fold, 2008, blown glass bowl, white with black spiral wrap, 5 x 27 in.

Middle:
Benjamin Moore
Palla Set Crimson, 2009, blown glass, vase 15 x 5 in., bowl 5 x 16 in.

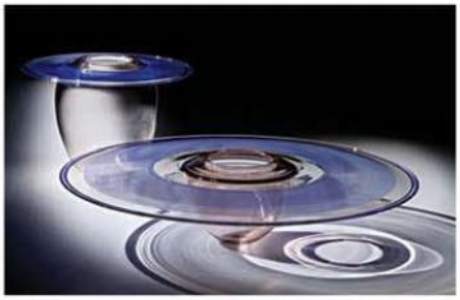
Bottom:
Benjamin Moore
Interior Fold Set, 1998, manganese with lapis spiral wrap, vase 9 x 14 in., bowl 5 x 21 in.





Fellow
Benjamin Moore

Benjamin Moore (b. 1952) began his long involvement in craft with a BFA in ceramics from the California College of Arts and Crafts. He then moved on to glass, receiving his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. After studying at Pilchuck Glass School, Moore served as faculty member there for years and is a trustee of the institution. In 2006 he received its Libensky Award for his contributions to studio glass. Known for his elegant blown-glass vessels and specialty lighting, Moore—who runs his own design business—has worked for such celebrated glassworks as Fabrica Venini in Venice. He is among those who carried the Italian glassmaking influence to Pilchuck. "The fundamental focus of my work is to achieve simplicity, balance, and clarity of form," Moore says. "The true challenge of creating an object is to give the piece a timeless presence."



Award of Distinction for Contributions to the Field of Craft
Michael Monroe

As curator, museum administrator, lecturer and juror, Michael Monroe has been prominent in the craft field for nearly 40 years. He was associated with the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery for 21 years, ultimately as curator-in-charge. In 1993, the Year of American Craft, he organized a collection for the White House—documented in a book—that toured for 10 years and can still be enjoyed online. The recipient of several lifetime achievement awards, Monroe was named an ACC Honorary Fellow in 1995; he also served three years as the Council's executive director. Since joining the Bellevue Arts Museum, WA, in 2004 as executive director/chief curator, he has raised its profile and made it a leading venue for crafts, presenting 47 exhibitions. Currently director of curatorial affairs, Monroe will become the museum's director emeritus upon his retirement in February.

Top:
Louis Marak
Square Root of Tree
(front and back),
2007, earthenware,
21¾ x 12½ x 5½ in.

Bottom:
Louis Marak
Fingered Fish Teapot
(front and back),
2008, earthenware,
16 x 13½ x 3¼ in.





Below:
Carol Shaw-Sutton
The White Sound, 2009,
twined waxed linen,
22 x 14 x 9 in.



Fellow

Louis Marak

In 2006 ceramist Louis Marak (b. 1942), retired from a long and distinguished teaching career that began in 1967 at Keuka College in upstate New York and continued at Humbodlt State University in California. During this time Marak, who received his BFA at the University of Illinois and his MFA from Alfred University, established himself as an internationally exhibited artist whose work is included in the permanent collection of, among other places, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. Marak is known for playing with perspective. He's interested in how the juxtaposition of images changes a piece. "My subject matter deals primarily with containers and containment," Marak once said. "Things inconsistent with common experience or having contradictory qualities fascinate me."

Fellow

Carol Shaw-Sutton

Carol Shaw-Sutton (b. 1948) earned her BA and MFA from California State University, San Diego, and has taught since 1984 at Cal State Long Beach, where she has headed the fiber program since 1990 and in 2002 was named art department outstanding professor. She gained national recognition with a 1977 American Craft Council Young Americans award and since then has received two National Endowment for the Arts individual fellowships, among many honors. Shaw-Sutton has exhibited extensively, including, in the 1980s, the Lausanne Biennial and an international textile exhibition in Kyoto, where her large suspended work, *Our Bones Are Made of Stardust,* won the Fine Arts Award. While early structural work in painted twigs was known for symbolic canoe shapes, recent installations and wall works of knitted linen or mixed media include garment imagery.

Shaw-Sutton photos Andrew Neuhart.

Top Left
Carol Shaw-Sutton
Sea of Dreams and *Sea of Despair,* 2006, knitted linen, pigments, stones, 10 x 9 x 11 ft.



Middle:
Rosanne Somerson
Father/Child Cabinet, 1995, detail.

Bottom:
Rosanne Somerson
Father/Child Cabinet, 1995, chestnut, oak, ivory lacewood, 72½ x 24 x 15½ in.





Somerson photos Dean Powell.

Fellow

Rosanne Somerson

The distinguished furniture maker/designer Rosanne Somerson (b. 1954) has long been associated with the Rhode Island School of Design (BFA 1976), where she found a mentor in the master woodworker Tage Frid. She began teaching there in 1985 and is currently head and professor of furniture design, the department she helped to establish. One of the early women in the field, Somerson also maintains her own studio, creating, for exhibition and by commission, furniture notable for its graceful, often witty forms and impeccable craftsmanship. She designs for production as well. She has engaged feminine references and asserted furniture's emotional resonance. "Drawers and compartments can store memories as well as things, seating provides not just pause but site…. And mirrors–well, we all know that they just lie." Thus, she says, her vanities and mirrors have distracting frames.

Honorary Fellow

Robert Pfannebecker

In 1964 Robert Pfannebecker drove from his home in Lancaster, PA, to the graduate degree exhibition at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he purchased several works. Thus began a more-than-40-year acquisitions odyssey that has resulted in an exceptional collection of early pieces by some of the major figures in American studio craft. Pfannebecker, a lawyer first known for his civil rights cases and subsequently several times city solicitor for Lancaster, had, by 1979, when he was profiled in American Craft, amassed more than 1,000 works in all craft media and added two freestanding gallery buildings to his rural home. He is noted for collecting directly from artists (often from degree shows) and staying in touch with them via correspondence or a monthly payment schedule. His still-growing collection now numbers around 3,000 works (and fills a third gallery building). ✚

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"I love anything that brings a smile to my face. If it's quirky, I like it. If it's handmade, I like it." —Marcy Carsey

Below:
Mechanical Automotive Turn Signals, ca. 1918, vintage warning signs, metal, glass, 6 x 4½ in.

Bottom:
An inside look at some of the folk and outsider art on display at Just Folk.

Producing Just Folk

STORY BY
Leslie Andrea Westbrook









"We were a couple of TV gals who knew nothing about retail," admits Marcy Carsey, the co-owner of Just Folk, a gallery in Summerland, CA, that features traditional American folk and outsider art. Carsey and her business partner, Susan Baerwald, had both found 30 years of success as Hollywood producers–Baerwald produced television miniseries and movies of the week as a network executive, while Carsey had her own production company with business partner Tom Werner, producing such hit television series as *The Cosby Show, Roseanne, Cybil* and *Grace Under Fire*–when they decided it was time to focus on another love: the handmade.

The two first discovered their mutual passion after meeting at a yoga class held at Carsey's Brentwood, CA, home. They quickly became friends, and their many conversations while hiking in the Santa Monica Mountains revealed they had much more in common.

Carsey had always been attracted to 19th-century American furniture along with what she refers to as "fun stuff," such as games, toys, whirligigs, tricycles and velocipedes. She began collecting these objects as soon as she had both the time and money. "I love anything that brings a smile to my face," she laughs. "If it's quirky, I like it. If it's handmade, I like it."

Meanwhile Baerwald collected outsider›



Top left:
Five Blue Measures, 20th century, wood, dia. from largest to smallest: 14, 12, 10, 8, 6 in.

Top right:
Paul Hart
The Revolution of Evolution, wood, old wheels, fan, 19 x 24 x 10 in.

Left:
Bill Traylor
Woman with Handbag and Umbrella, ca. 1932, paint and graphite on cardboard, 16 x 8 in.







art and quilts. Her interest in American craft was sparked long ago when her parents bought a summer home that once belonged to a branch of the Guggenheim family. The home was filled with Early American antiques—spinning wheels and cobblers' benches. "Those things spurred my love for that period of American creativity and ingenuity," she recalls.

Three years ago Baerwald and Carsey decided that after many decades of collecting it was time to share their fervor for craft with others. Since both had always planned to retire with their families to coastal Santa Barbara, about 100 miles north of Los Angeles, the area was a natural choice for a gallery; and Summerland, five miles south of the city and filled with antiques shops, was a perfect fit. They commissioned the architect Brian Cearnal to create a barnlike,





Opposite left:
Watch Out for Lambs with Lions Paws, ca. 1976, enamel, wood, 11 x 13 x 3 in.

Opposite right:
Leroy Archuleta
Rooster, 1994, carved wood, paint, 26 x 9 x 24 in.

Opposite bottom left:
African American Quilt, ca. 1930, cotton, 78 x 59 in.

Opposite bottom right:
In 2007 the gallery won an architecture award.

Left:
Boneshaker Bicycle, ca. 1987, wood, 45 x 74 x 17 in.

Bottom:
Shiner/Boxer, 2008, wood, rulers, tape measures, fabric, boxing gloves, 47 x 14 x 13 in.

metal-roofed, two-story building–which subsequently won the 2007 Santa Barbara Best New Commercial Project Award–reflecting the tone of the work featured inside. The gallery found instant appeal among the locals. A wide, welcoming brick entrance invites porch sitting, and summer parties are a popular draw in the tight-knit seaside community.

Just Folk has quickly established itself as a go-to source for collectors and dealers alike. Baerwald and Carsey scour auctions and other sources for items to add to their shop, as well as their ever-changing personal collections. These many treasures range from the lighthearted, such as papier-mâché watermelon slices, game boards and tramp art, to the more high-end, including drawings by Bill Traylor (for whom they mounted a major show from Oct. 9 through Dec. 10 and produced a catalog entitled *Unfiltered*), wood carvings by Leroy Archuleta and textile paintings by Chris Roberts Antieau. Their lifelong appreciation for folk art is now fueled by the ability to keep things circulating and adopted by new folk and outsider art aficionados. However, it is never easy for Baerwald and Carsey to part with the objects they have fallen in love with–both confess to occasionally asking for "visiting rights" when something is sold.

Baerwald and her husband, Paul, divide their time between their folk-art-filled Los Angeles home and a cozy cottage adjacent to the gallery. In a heartbreaking turn of events, Carsey, who also had homes in both areas, lost her nearby Montecito house and the many objects she had spent years collecting in the Tea Fire in 2008–a disaster that consumed over 200 homes. Looking ahead, she is designing and building a new, green house, built of stone, in the original location. Just Folk is also a source of solace as it allows her to remain surrounded by the things she loves on a daily basis.

While Carsey and Baerwald may be the brains behind the gallery, it's the energy of the artists, both known and anonymous, that steals the show. But the women are used to that: it's the producer's role and they're very happy to fill it in a new way. "We get to do what we want now," says Baerwald, referring to her hectic years climbing the Hollywood executive ladder. Today the only reason she and Carsey are climbing ladders is to access unique items among the upper reaches of the two-story high shelving.

Based in Santa Barbara, Leslie Andrea Westbrook has written for Antiques West, San Francisco Chronicle *and* Conde Nast Traveler*, among other publications.*

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Wayne Art Center, 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne, PA 19087, Phone: (610) 688-3553, www.wayneart.org, info@wayneart.org. Dec. 4, 2009–Jan. 23, 2010 "Craft Forms 2009," international juried exhibition of contemporary craft, juried by Bruce W. Pepich, executive director/curator of collections, Racine Art Museum. "Reflections in Glass," regional juried exhibition of contemporary glass, curated by Arlene Silvers, director of glass events, National Liberty Museum. Preview party: Dec. 4, 6:00–10:00 pm. CF09 Juror's Lecture/Meet the Artists, Saturday, Dec. 5, 2009, 1:00–3:00 pm. Gallery hours: Monday-Saturday, 10:00 am–5:00 pm.

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Intellectually speaking, there isn't much difference between a Pilchuck glassblowing demo and a televised lumberjacking competition.



Steffen Graf competing in the springboard category.

Timber!

ESSAY BY
Glenn Adamson

"Power, precision, speed, accuracy." The motto of the American Craft Council? No, it's the slogan of *Stihl Timbersports*, a televised competition in which contestants go head-to-head cutting through logs with an ax (this takes about twelve seconds), a two-person bucksaw (thirteen seconds) or a chainsaw (seven). The winners tend to be macho men from countries noted for their forestry, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Austria and Denmark. The atmosphere of the show, however, is strictly World Wide Wrestling Federation. The audience hoots enthusiastically, and rock music blares on the soundtrack. When I caught the program on German television, it was immediately followed by the World's Strongest Man finals.

Timbersports is an example of a phenomenon I have been noticing a lot recently: manual skill presented in as pure and extreme a form as possible. In fine art, we have Tara Donovan, who makes sculptures like a three-foot-high cube of toothpicks, held together with nothing but friction, or Dave Cole, who has knitted giant teddy bears from strips of lead. Until recently you could watch the television show *Craft Corner Deathmatch*, on which contestants were challenged to glue-gun items into existence in ten minutes or less, before being judged by the Craft Lady of Steel. Pushed to unreasonable lengths, skill is exerting an unprecedented hold on the public imagination. Why?

Timbersports may have something to tell us about that. I would argue that it is actually a show about craft, but not in the artistic sense. This is what a German would call *handwerk*–which implies a sense of skill but not necessarily an aesthetic sensibility–as opposed to *kunsthandwerk*, or "artistic craft." (The same distinction exists in other languages. In Japanese, for example, a sharp distinction has sometimes been made between *dentô kôgei* and *kôgei bijutsu*, "traditional craft" and "art craft," respectively.) Skill in this arena is judged objectively, in milliseconds. When a crowd goes wild for two large men in tight T-shirts wielding axes, they aren't looking for "art craft." They are after something more primal, more certain, than that.

In studio craft circles, we are used to dismissing such displays of raw skill. If workmanship doesn't lead to something conceptually convincing or stylistically arresting, it finds no place in craft museums, magazines and history books. There are at least two problems with this attitude. First, the craft movement has long depended on the instantaneous appeal of *handwerk*, in the form of craft performances at expositions, fairs, conferences and the like. Intellectually speaking, there isn't much difference between a Pilchuck glassblowing demo and a televised lumberjacking competition. But that doesn't mean that either is inconsequential. Feats of pure skill, considered independently from artistic achievement, are a powerful force in craft culture.

Second, if craft is a process, it makes little sense to judge it by its results alone. An important new documentary by Faythe Levine, *Handmade Nation*, attests to this. The young crafters captured by her camera are not necessarily great artists or designers, but they are impassioned: anti-globalist, environmentalist, feminist, queer, "slow," subcultural. Cutting down forests certainly isn't on their agenda. The men of *Timbersports* would have to agree with the central tenet of DIY, though: it's the doing that counts, not the product.

So this is one way that new audiences are connecting with craft: as a stripped-down, nonartistic, but nonetheless satisfying experience. This is probably because it feels "real." Of course, there's no actual necessity at work here. No one needs to chop a tree down by hand anymore, nor do we need an endless choice of bespoke mittens. At a moment when authenticity is a precious commodity, though, this is how people seem to want their craft. Mediated, yes. But definitely uncut. ✚

Glenn Adamson is head of graduate studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and co-editor of the Journal of Modern Craft.

AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL

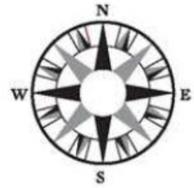
The American Craft Council is a national, nonprofit public educational organization founded in 1943 by Aileen Osborn Webb. The mission of the Council is to promote understanding and appreciation of contemporary American craft. Programs include the bimonthly magazine American Craft, annual juried shows presenting artists and their work, the Aileen Osborn Webb Awards honoring excellence, a specialized library, conferences, workshops and seminars.

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STORY BY
Meganne Fabrega

Portsmouth, NH: A Harbor for Craft



For most New Englanders November is the start of their long winter hibernation, but for craftspeople in Portsmouth, on New Hampshire's 18-mile sliver of Atlantic Coast, it's time to open the doors of their studios and homes to welcome their neighbors, friends and visitors from throughout New England. The festivities begin with the Portsmouth Holiday Arts Tour–an intimate look into the home and work lives of area artisans.

Potters Maureen Mills and Steve Zoldak created the tour nine years ago to showcase the work of local craftspeople, many of them nationally recognized for outstanding work in their discipline. "We wanted to emphasize to the community that there are artists living and working in their neighborhoods, just like there were 300 years ago," says Zoldak. "I still find odd bits and pieces from a blacksmith who used to live somewhere near our property." When they're not traveling the country or working on other projects (Lark Books recently published Mills's *Surface Design for Ceramics*), it's a short commute for Mills and Zoldak to the kiln and glaze studio in their backyard, where they use an old-world slip trail technique on stoneware to create functional pottery. They spend the summer season selling their wares in their shop at Portsmouth's Strawbery Banke Museum–a complex of restored houses and gardens–honoring a centuries-old tradition of craft commerce in that neighborhood.

Strawbery Banke is not only a link to the past; it was also a starting point for many local craftspeople. Peter Happny, a blacksmith, first went to Strawbery Banke to

A rich sense of history and easy access to major cities and museums make Portsmouth a natural locale for a burgeoning arts community.



study one of its historic homes for a class. "Thirty-eight years later, I'm still in Portsmouth," he says, looking at his wife, Lisa Grey, whom he met at Strawbery Banke during the 1970s, when Grey had a weaving studio there. As rents increased in the 1980s, many craftspeople migrated from downtown Portsmouth to studios that had opened at an abandoned button factory on the outskirts of town, but Grey and Happny purchased an old factory building in an industrial zone, where they live and work today. In addition to Grey's busy teaching schedule–including workshops at the Mendocino Arts Center in California and Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina–she can be found in her rooftop studio, experimenting with disperse dyes as she integrates her love of photography with the handwork of textile craft, while Happny works on his "jewelry for buildings" downstairs in the forge. Happny collaborates with designers and architects from New Hampshire to New York, creating one-of-a-kind railings, light fixtures and iron sculptures for private residences as well as public buildings.

Portsmouth's rich sense of history and easy access to major cities and museums make it a natural locale for the burgeoning arts community. Boston is one hour south, Portland one hour north and at points in between you'll find such treasures as the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, the Currier Museum of Art and the Peabody Essex Museum. For those who don't want to travel, an active cultural commission, Art-Speak, funds art exhibitions and events in town. There are also monthly gallery walks, outdoor festivals, holiday open›



Above:
The woodwork of Portsmouth local Mark Fenwick, who has been carving since he was a boy, has received national attention.

Left:
Lisa Grey experiments with disperse dyes on fabric, such as in *Anywhere But Here.* Over the past several decades, Grey and her husband, blacksmith Peter Happny, have borne witness to the city's strong craft scene.

Opposite:
Potter Steve Zoldak, whose slip-trailed stoneware pieces include this platter and tall jar, both 2009, created the Portsmouth Holiday Arts Tour with his wife, Maureen Mills, with the goal of showcasing local craft work.

Grey photo Dean Powell.







studios at the Button Factory, and film festivals and live concerts at the Music Hall, which was designated an "American Treasure" by the U.S. Senate and featured in the *New York Times* last fall after extensive renovation. While Portsmouth offers its share of hearty New England fare, visitors can also find innovative restaurants mentioned in the pages of *Bon Appétit* and the now-defunct *Gourmet,* including the Black Trumpet Bistro and the Green Monkey. It's no wonder that the city's population jumps from 22,000 to over 60,000 during the summer and fall months.

It was a boyhood trip to the Peabody Essex Museum to see the intricate figureheads, ship carvings and Polynesian art that inspired Mark Fenwick to begin his lifelong relationship with carving. "I got home, grabbed my little hatchet and ran out in the backyard to start carving tiki heads," he says, laughing. Fenwick's sculptures, reminiscent of sentries, are scattered throughout the backyard as he works on a hand-carved coffin for a prominent–and still living–local attorney. His works have been commissioned nationwide and he recently finished an artist-in-residence program in Western Massachusetts.

Portsmouth's location on New Hampshire's coastline does more than inspire many local craftspeople: Wendolyn Hammer also gets her materials from it. After working as a jeweler for 19 years, Hammer wanted to get away from the "fussiness" of jewelry and began playing with bigger pieces of material. She started making cheese knives out of beach stones for family Christmas gifts and has expanded into candlesticks and even a caviar box incorporating glass and metal details. Deb Thompson, owner of Nahcotta, a local gallery, describes these pieces as "the best combination of form and function."

Kristina Logan used to come to Portsmouth so often for events, the restaurants and the ocean that she moved there. Logan, whom David Whitehouse of the Corning Museum of Glass calls "the leading maker of glass beads working today," loves the proximity to the Atlantic. "I can jump on my bike, have a picnic lunch at the beach and quickly be back working in my studio again," she says. "The seacoast is different from the rest of New Hampshire." Logan works with traditional Venetian flameworking techniques to create her beads, and you can feel her passion when she talks about her craft. "I love how beads have always been cherished and carried around; they have all sorts of different importance to different people. I connect with that."

Jeweler Sara Dulong Apsey also appreciates the mobility of her craft and likens pieces of jewelry to little "memories." Sitting outside the popular local hangout Ceres Bakery, under one of the many signs around town made by Peter Happny, Apsey chats with friends walking by. "Portsmouth is a very encouraging place to be an artist," she says. "People are creating things. It's not about people working to make money to pay their bills; it's more 'What are you working on?' or 'What do you like to do?' Making things, or cooking things, it's a good mix." After a life-changing workshop at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts with Susan Sloan, Apsey began to integrate

Logan photo Dennis Murray / *Persian Doughnut Brooch* photo Dean Powell.

Opposite top:
Jewelry maker Kristina Logan, who created this 2008 flame-worked *Persian Doughnut Brooch,* finds inspiration for her glass beads in the city's seacoast.

Opposite bottom:
Jeweler Wendolyn Hammer moved into other genres, such as *Urchin Candlestick,* 2009, when she began experimenting with beach stones.

Left:
Sara Dulong Apsey, who integrates custom-colored epoxy resin into her silver jewelry such as *Trapezoid Bracelet,* finds Portsmouth an inspiring place to be an artist.

Bottom:
Nahcotta Gallery in downtown Portsmouth displays work from local artists, including Hammer.





Left:
The beauty of Portsmouth's Atlantic coastline draws many artists to the city.

"People are creating things. It's not about people working to make money to pay the bills; it's more 'What are you working on?'"—Sara Dulong Apsey

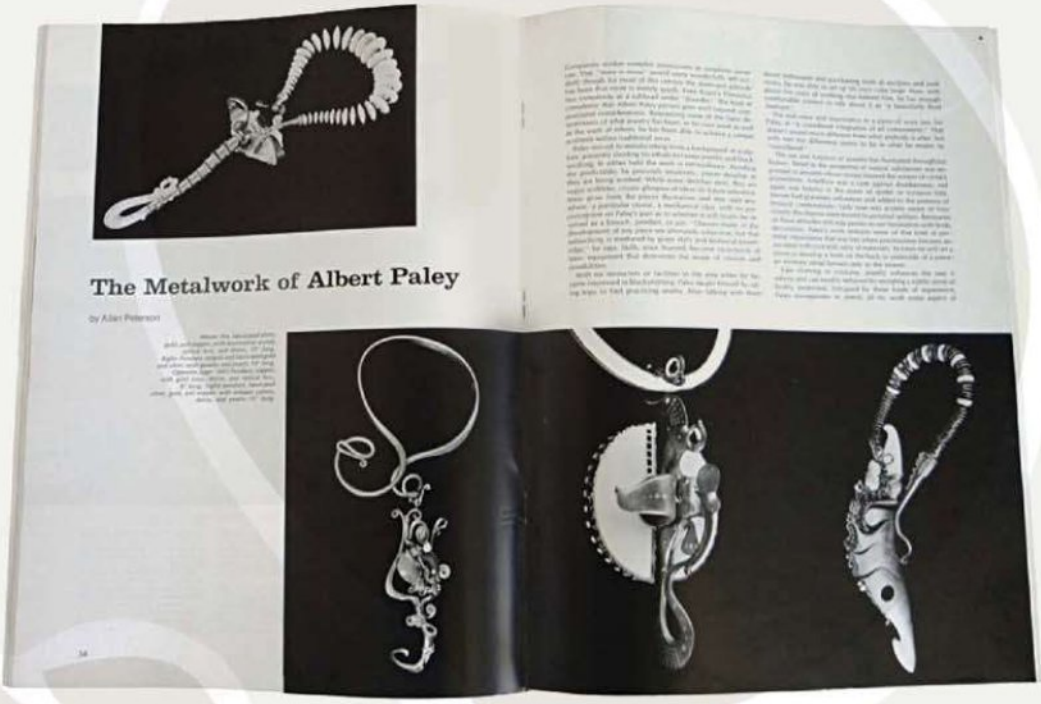
custom-colored epoxy resin into her silver work. She creates her own colors without a specific formula or chart so that no two pieces of her work are ever the same.

As craftspeople from Portsmouth travel around the country, teaching workshops and showing their pieces at craft shows, they're often asked about how they survive the long, cold New Hampshire winters. "It's a love-hate thing," Apsey says, "I have those days [when] I'm at the beach and it's winter, and I'm with the dog and it's so frigid and biting. But I see the color of the water and the sky, and I think 'Oh my God, I have to get to my studio.' You take a few deep breaths and you're energized. It's a good way to start the day." ✚

Meganne Fabrega has written about craft, culture and books for Craft: Transforming Traditional Crafts, *the* San Francisco Chronicle, Publisher's Weekly *and other periodicals.*

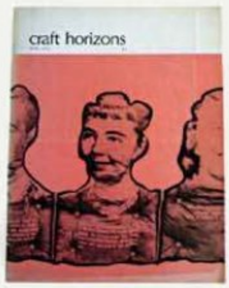


Nahcotta photo Michael Winters / Portsmouth photo courtesy of Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce..



The Metalwork of Albert Paley

STORY BY
Christine Kaminsky



"It would be difficult to remain unaffected by his constructions," Allan Peterson observed of Albert Paley's early career in the April 1973 *Craft Horizons.* The now-acclaimed metal sculptor was then focused on jewelry, primarily complex, fanciful forms, in outsized dimensions.

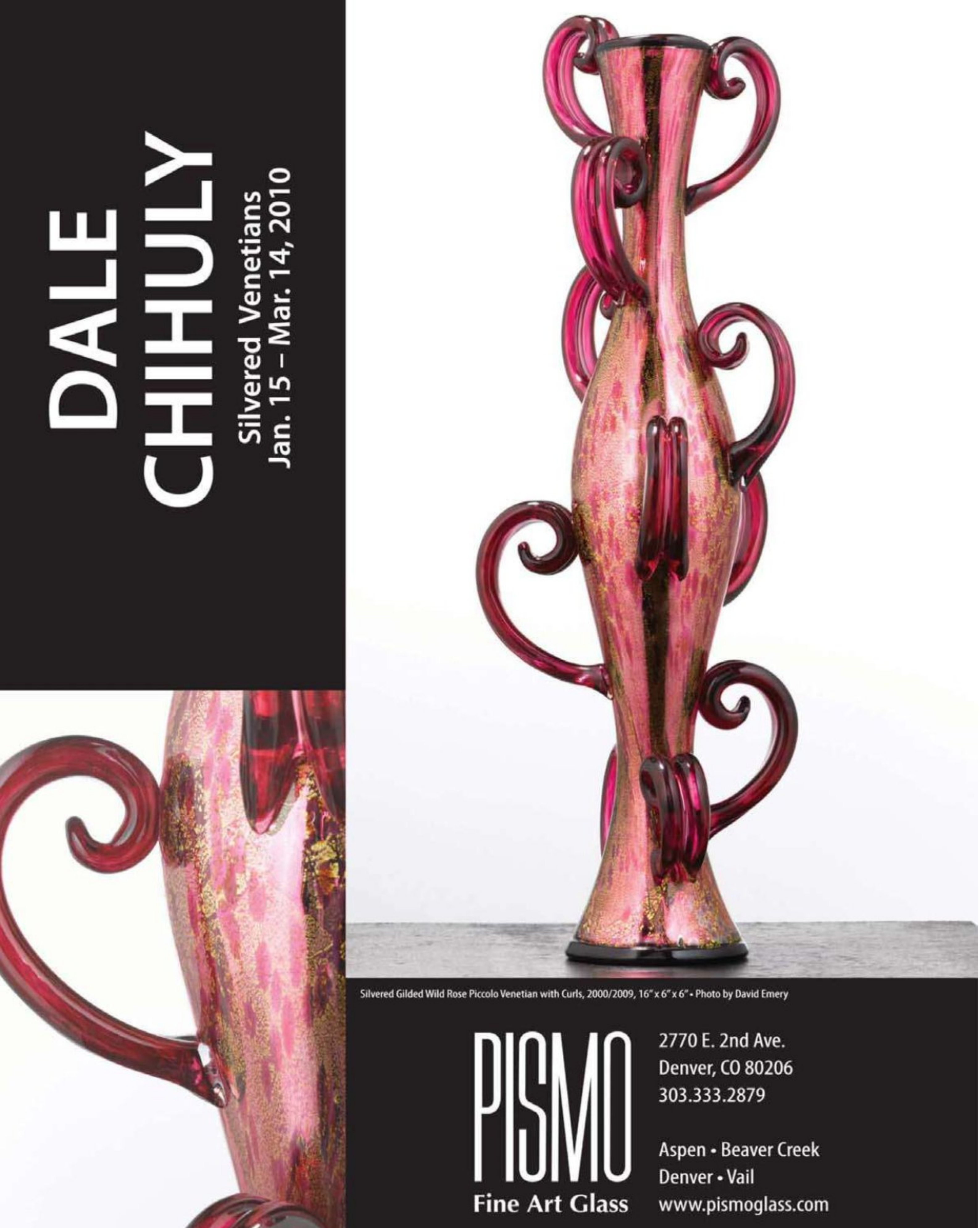
Paley, who maintains a studio in Rochester, NY, transitioned to large-scale sculptural and architectural metalwork beginning with the massive *Portal Gates* at the Renwick Gallery. Since then he has completed more than 50 site-specific works. His monumental sculptures in Rochester—*Threshold,* at the Klein Steel headquarters, and *Sentinel,* at the Rochester Institute of Technology—are, respectively, the subject of a book and a PBS documentary. Paley's latest public piece, *Evanesce,* towering at 100 feet, is part of an urban project in Monterrey, Mexico, and the fabrication of four sculptures for the 24th Street Bridge in Council Bluffs, IA, is underway.

The recipient of many honors, Paley is the first metal sculptor to receive a lifetime achievement award for integrating art with architecture from the American Institute of Architects. He was elected to the American Craft Council's College of Fellows in 1994.

The artist's work can now be seen in a solo show at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ, until April 18. Another one-man show will open in May at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester. "Sketches to Steel: The Design Process of Sculptor Albert Paley," scheduled to begin touring in July through ExhibitsUSA, will present drawings, studies, maquettes and in-situ photographs selected from Paley's archives. Mildred F. Schmertz, contributing editor for *Architecture* magazine, notes, "The ultimate meaning in a sequence of Paley drawings is to be found in its outcome: a work in metal, wrought with consummate skill." ✚

To read the entire *Craft Horizons* article, visit us at americancraftmag.org.

At the heart of the sixth floor of 72 Spring Street in New York City is the American Craft Council library, one of the largest collections in this country of craft, art and design books documenting the studio craft movement from the 1940s to the present. The over 14,000 volumes include the Council's 67-year publishing history—all past issues of *Craft Horizons* and American Craft. We'd like to share some of this amazing past with you each issue as we dig though the stacks. And if you happen to be in New York, the library is open to the public by appointment.



Silvered Gilded Wild Rose Piccolo Venetian with Curls, 2000/2009, 16″ x 6″ x 6″ • Photo by David Emery


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